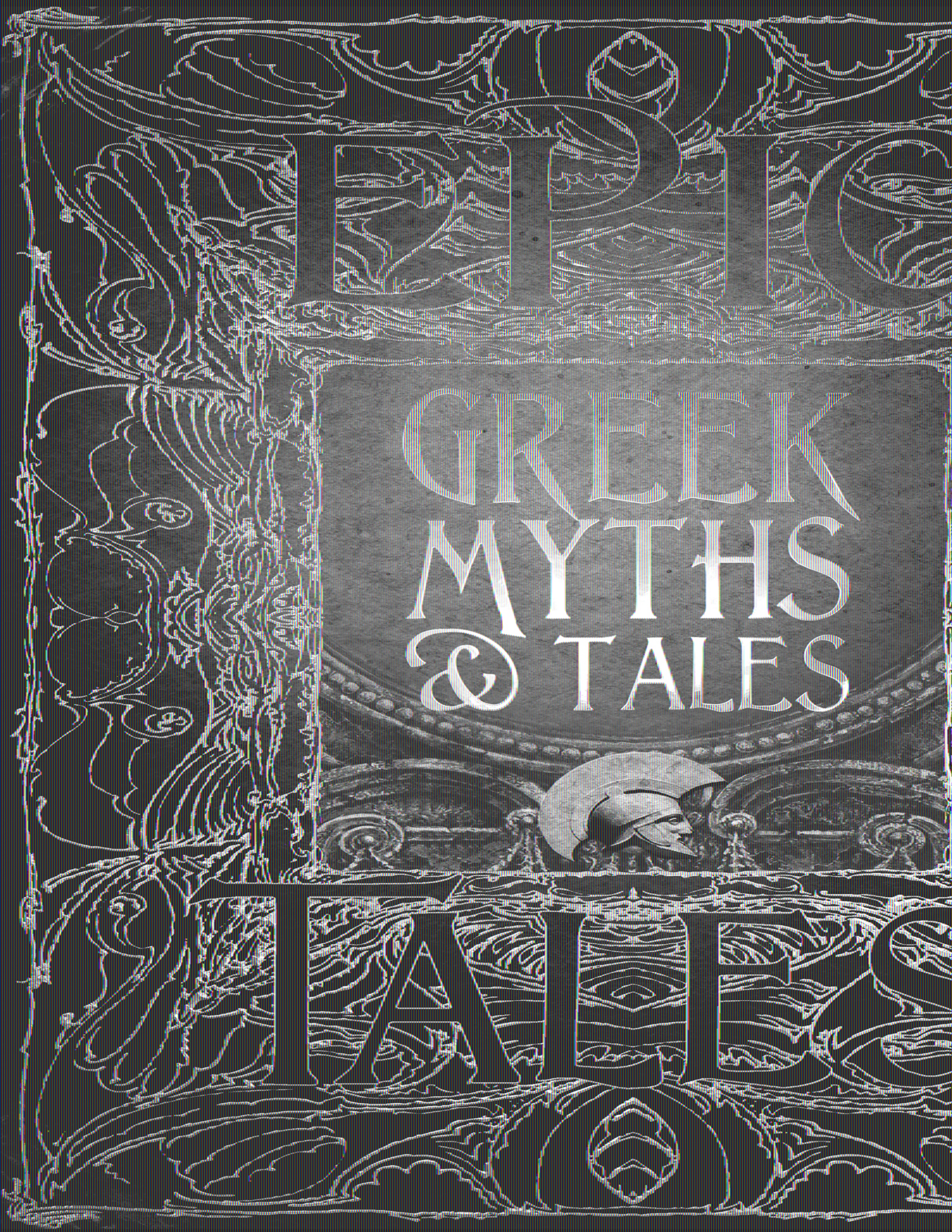
GREEK
MYTHS
& TALES

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# Foreword:

## *Mary Shelley Horror Stories*

**ANYONE TURNING THE PAGES** of yet another new collection of retellings of the Greek myths, like the present one, might be forgiven for wondering why publishers still go back to this material. The answer is simple. These stories are as powerfully relevant today as they have ever been. It's true that some of the locations – Cyllene, Pieria, Tiryns – may sound unfamiliar. So may some of the names: Andromache, Diomedes, Pentheus. But other places and names are still firmly part of our cultural heritage: Athens and Troy; Achilles and Odysseus. Greek mythical characters still make implied claims to status in numerous real-world twenty-first-century contexts: Eros is one of London's iconic landmarks; the Heracles General Cement Corporation is a major industrial company in Greece and beyond; NASA's Apollo space program took humans to the Moon.

Even more significant is the fact that many of the issues raised by the myths remain live and contemporary. Take an episode usually referred to as 'The Judgement of Paris'. When the Trojan prince Paris was confronted by three beautiful goddesses demanding to know which of them was the *most* beautiful, how was he to choose? He did so by ranking the three bribes which they offered: supreme political power (Hera), victory in war (Athene), or the sexiest woman in the world in his bed (Aphrodite). As to the choice he made, that is, as they say, history: and what followed his choice was the Trojan War, since that super-sexy woman was Helen, married to the Greek warrior Menelaus. But at the root of the myth is the fascinating idea of an insoluble dilemma. The same is true for Antigone, the woman who, in Sophocles' unforgettable tragedy, has to choose between defying the ruler of the state, and burying the corpse of her traitorous brother. Greek myths constantly come back to dilemmas, to thought experiments. That is one major reason why they remain contemporary.

Another reason for us to keep going back to the Greek myths is that they are never simple, and often fascinatingly ambiguous. In Greek mythology, the truth is never a matter of black and white, of pure good and pure evil. There are plenty of unpleasant characters in the myths, but they all have a case to argue, a role to play, a justification to advance. For instance, the goddesses known as the Furies were physically repulsive, but they exercised a vital moral function: they pursued those guilty of crimes of blood against their own kin. Indeed not one of the Greek gods can be said to be simply 'good' (or 'bad'); they all have their personal agendas, their corners to fight. This same moral complexity applies to the humans too. Take the Suitors, those local Ithacan men who wooed Penelope in the absence of her husband Odysseus, as Homer narrates in the *Odyssey.* All our sympathies might *seem* to lie with Odysseus and against the Suitors. But maybe it's not so straightforward. After all, everyone assumed that Odysseus was dead – in which case it was absolutely logical and expected for Penelope to remarry. Even the Suitors have a justification to advance.

We shouldn't, though, get carried away with the idea of up-to-dateness. Another pleasure to be gained from reading the Greek myths is to recognize their difference, their alterity, their (to us) strangeness. The gods and goddesses in the myths were not just fictions: they were objects of religious cult, usually worshipped via the complex ritual of animal sacrifice – hardly a feature of our own world. Other sorts of ritual and customary behaviour – involving, for instance, 'supplication' and hospitality – were also at the root of many myths; once more, we may be struck by difference rather than similarity. And what could be more different, indeed more 'alien', than the monsters which put in an appearance throughout the myths: Harpies, Cyclopes, Chimeras and Hydras? Many of the contexts within which myths were retold are also hard to parallel in our own culture: long performances of epic poetry by bards performing to lyre accompaniment; tragic dramas staged before audiences of over 10,000; mythical images found on a variety of objects, from painted vases to temple sculptures. Greek myths challenge us by the shock of difference as well as by the realisation of continuity.

But when all is said and done, it *is* that continuity of experience which counts for most. It has been said that the meaning of *King Lear* is the same as the meaning of the universe. Of the things which Oedipus did and

suffered one might say the same. Fantastically improbable though his fate might seem, it stands, in its way, for the fate of all of us: to struggle against ignorance, to search for one's identity come what may, even if the result is utter catastrophe.

*Richard Buxton*
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## Publisher's Note

The fascinating characters and tales from Greek mythology have long intrigued us. The gods of the ancient Greeks were passionate and violent, jealous of their powers and subject to both mighty outbursts of love and all-consuming bouts of vengeful war. Thus populated with a pantheon of gods, daring yet flawed heroes, and supernatural creatures, the mythology of the ancient Greeks explored themes of love, courage and conflict as well as forming explanations for many aspects of nature and even the creation of the world, providing a tradition of fabulous tales that are retold in this new book. Featuring all the well-known characters you'd expect, like the deities Zeus and Aphrodite or the heroes Heracles and Achilles, as well as perhaps some lesser known stories in the Greek canon, the stories on the following pages are infused with a wonder and excitement it's hard to beat.

As these tales were core to the everyday lives of the ancient Greeks, we have provided some contextual information about many of the gods you will encounter, such as their main attributes and how they were worshipped; as well as a chapter at the end of the book which briefly explores how Greek myths came to influence the Romans. Whilst this in no way seeks to comprehensively cover Roman mythology as well, it shows what an influences these stories had on other civilisations and how they came to be part of our Western traditions. Multiple sources have been used for the tales we have selected for this edition, but this reflects the nature of the ancient myths themselves – often passed along orally, re-interpreted, and continually adapted.

# GREEK MYTHOLOGY

## Introduction

**THE STORIES OF GREEK MYTHOLOGY** forged the common Greek identity and have been a key influence in the development of Western European art, music and literature since their debut in the eighth century bc, via the epic poems of Homer. These poems mark the introduction of the Olympians; divinities with human flaws, who presided over the fortunes of mortal men.

In about 1900 bc, Greek-speaking peoples from the Caucasus migrated to the southern European peninsula known today as Greece (or Hellas). There they found a land of valleys and mountains, one of which, Mount Olympus, was so high (2917 m/9750 ft) it seemed to touch the heavens – it therefore had to be the home of the gods. Since this peninsula was bounded on three sides by seas (the Ionian, Aegean and Mediterranean), the newcomers naturally looked for trade to neighbouring maritime peoples, as far afield as Asia Minor (eastern Turkey) and North Africa. From these ancient cultures, the Greeks took music, poetry and names of exotic deities, like Hera and Athene; they also took their alphabet, probably from the Phoenicians (southern Syria).

## Foundation of Greek Mythology

As city-states, like Athens and Sparta, grew and colonization developed, by the fifth century bc hundreds of Greek communities had arisen, lying round the shores of the Mediterranean (‘like frogs about a pond’, as Plato put it), the Black Sea, southern Italy and North Africa. Small wonder that the Greek imagination peopled the seas with monsters, giants and sirens whom heroes such as Jason, Odysseus, Theseus and Heracles had to overcome.

In 338 bc Greece fell to Philip II of Macedonia and soon became part of Alexander the Great’s empire. But less than two centuries later, in 146 bc, the expanding power of Rome saw Greece reduced to a Roman province.

That was not the end of Greek culture however, for many of its gods and heroes were adapted by the Romans under different names (Zeus became Jupiter, Aphrodite – Venus, and Heracles – Hercules).

Greek belief in gods reached its peak between 800 bc and 330 bc. Every city of the ancient Greek world possessed its own myths, heroes and festivals. Despite the diversity, there were rites and festivals, such as the Olympic Games, in which all freeborn Greeks could take part. In addition, the great epic poems of Homer, Hesiod and other bards were known throughout the Greek world. Universal themes – of the Argonauts journeying in search of the Golden Fleece, of the 12 tests of Heracles, of Odysseus' adventures on his return from the Trojan War – helped form a sense of nationhood.

The myths were passed on and adapted by the storytelling tradition, from mouth to mouth. So the pantheon of gods was well established by the time the myths were written down in about 750 bc. When Athens became the centre of Greek intellectual life in the fifth century bc, well over half the adult male population of the city could read and write. The level of literacy in all Greek cities of this period was higher than at any period of Western culture before the twentieth century. It is also important to bear in mind two factors. First, for many purposes Greek culture remained an oral culture. Second, literacy did not extend to slaves (who in Athens accounted for a third of the population) or women. Ancient Greece was not a true democracy and the polis was essentially a male association. True, the most powerful figures seen in Greek tragedy are women, and several goddesses (Hera, Athene, Demeter) show more independence than their sisters in other pantheons, but only men were supposedly endowed with reason (logos) and were therefore the decision-makers in the real society.

## Myth in Society

For many centuries, Western civilization looked upon mythology as Greek mythology. Only when collections of myths were made from other cultures was it clear how unique Greek myths were and what an important role they played. Over the centuries, faith in the absolute veracity of the old tales gradually faded. But Greeks had never wholly believed in their own interpretations of nature and history, so there is no standard version of a myth or epic.

In the traditional early versions of Jason and the Golden Fleece (of which only fragments remain), Jason's ill-fortune is put down to the wiles of his wife Medea. Yet, later, Apollonius of Rhodes gives us a different version in which Medea is described as a victim of Jason's infidelity and madness. Again, Homer has the beautiful Helen as prize for Paris of Troy; he elopes with her, so causing the Trojan War. Later poets (Stesichorus, Euripides), however, deny that Helen ever went to Troy at all. The historian Herodotus sums it up when he says that, 'Homer knew the story, but it was not such an attractive subject for verse'. In his *Republic*, the philosopher Plato rejects virtually all the old myths, calling them immoral, and suggests new ones.

Each new bard, therefore, had the right to interpret historical tradition in his own way and the audience did not feel obliged to accept any one as received truth. In fact, the very dynamic nature of myth was intended to stimulate discussion of such virtues as truth, morality and ethics.

Greek myth is unusual in other ways. It very rarely involves talking animals, unlike myths from other parts of the world. Mostly the incidents described are no more than an embellishment of everyday life rather than fantasy adventures. The great bulk of Greek tales also features heroes: men and women from a particular time and place. True, they have greater powers than ordinary mortals, but they are not all-powerful. In Homer's *Iliad*, when Diomedes and Patroclus attack the gods, Apollo reminds them: 'Remember who you are! Gods and men can never be equal.' By contrast, for example, Norse and Egyptian mythologies are far more concerned with gods than heroes.

Another quality of the myths is the educational role they played in society. In fifth-century bc Athens, aristocratic boys had as many as 12 years of schooling, divided into literature, music and physical education. The literature element mainly meant learning verse-myth by heart, taking in its moral content and debating issues raised. From Homer to the late tragedies, it is through myths that poets develop their deepest thoughts. The myths also provide a history of the Greek people, as well as contributing rich material for philosophical debates. In addition, they give ample subject matter for all the visual arts, from the great sculptures and statues adorning temples to mosaics and pottery paintings.

# Olympian Gods

Ancient Greece had its cosmogonies, myths of how the world began and other stories of the gods. Although the gods travel far and wide, they always return to their homes beyond the clouds on Mount Olympus. Hence they are known as the Olympic gods or Olympians. Each god has his or her own home, although they usually come together in the palace of Zeus, father of the gods. There they feast on ambrosia and nectar, served by the lovely goddess Hebe and entertained by Apollo on his lyre. It is an immortal world of feasting and discussion of the affairs of heaven and earth.

Zeus, though known as the father of the gods, has a beginning. His father and mother are Cronus and Rhea, of the race of Titans, themselves children of heaven/Uranus and earth/Gaea. They, in turn, sprang from Chaos ('the yawning abyss'). Zeus and his two brothers, Poseidon and Hades, shared out the world, with Zeus taking the heavens, Poseidon the seas and Hades the underworld.

The lame god Hephaestus was architect, smith and artist for the gods; he even forged thunderbolts which Zeus hurled at his enemies. In gratitude, Zeus gave him Aphrodite, goddess of love and beauty, as his wife. Some myths say that she was born of sea foam and clothed by the seasons. Eros, god of love, is her son; armed with his bow and arrows, he fires his love darts into the hearts of gods and humans. Athene, goddess of wisdom, sprang fully adult from the head of Zeus; it was she who gave her name to the city of Athens and to the most famous of all Greek temples, the Parthenon (built between 447 and 438 bc) or Athene Parthonos (Athene the Virgin).

Hermes, messenger of the gods, is usually seen wearing a winged cap and sandals. He is also the god of trade, wrestling and other sports, even thieving – whatever requires skill and dexterity. Dionysus, god of wine, presides over sacred festivals to mark the grape harvest, wine being sacred and its drinking ritualized. Dionysus is often portrayed with male and female satyrs (horned creatures, half human, half-goat) and maenads (fauns). Since he is also the god of passion, many temples were named after him and festivals held in his name.

The nine Muses, who were daughters of Zeus and Mnemosyne (Memory), were originally goddesses of memory, but later each becomes identified with song, verse, dance, comedy, tragedy, astronomy, history, art and science. The three Graces (also Zeus' daughers) bestow beauty and charm on humans and preside over banquets, dancing and all elegant entertainment.

The three Fates control every person's birth, life and death. Also known as the Cruel Fates, they spend their time spinning the threads of human destiny and cutting them with shears whenever they wish. Finally, the three Furies punish all transgressors mercilessly, usually with a deadly sting. Greeks preferred to call them the Eumenides (Good-Tempered Ones), as it would have been bad luck to use their proper name.

## Origins of Humanity

Early Greek mythology had no agreed account of the origin of humanity. Sometimes humans emerged from clay, stones or ash trees. Much later, Plato claimed that the first man was a round ball with eight limbs but Zeus cut him in half to form the first man and woman. The best-known origin tale is that concerning the Titan Prometheus, who one day made a man out of clay and water in the image of the gods. But he had to pay for his bold deed.

To help men, Prometheus (whose name means 'forethought') stole fire from the sun's chariot and took it to earth hidden in a fennel stalk. Zeus was furious. He ordered Hephaestus to make a woman out of clay and send her down to earth. Her name was Pandora and, being made in heaven, she possessed every possible gift – including curiosity. At the home of Prometheus' brother, the slow-witted Epimetheus (meaning 'afterthought'), was a sealed jar that Pandora was told never to open. Of course, she opened it, so releasing all the suffering and torment that beset human lives to this day. In fear, she replaced the lid, trapping just one thing inside: hope. The jar became known as Pandora's Box.

Zeus then took revenge on Prometheus. He had him chained to a rock on Mount Caucasus where an eagle pecked out his liver. Being immortal, he could not die; the liver grew back in the night, and his torment started again with each new day.

In another myth, Zeus sent a flood to drown all humans. Deucalion, Prometheus' son, and his wife Pyrrha (daughter of Pandora and Epimetheus) built an ark in which they survived the flood, ending up on Mount Parnassus. They prayed at the Oracle of Delphi and were told to throw stones over their shoulders as they walked along. Those tossed by Deucalion turned into men, those by Pyrrha into women. Thus the human race was recreated on earth.

According to Hesiod, in his *Works and Days*, there were five ages of humanity. In the first, the golden age, people lived in peace and plenty. The earth gave its riches freely, wine flowed from the vine and milk came of its own accord from cows and sheep. Inasmuch as people never grew old, death was no more terrible than falling asleep. In the course of time, the golden age gave way to the silver age. For the first time the year was divided into seasons and people had to build houses to protect themselves from winter wind and autumn rain. Since all sons were subject to their mothers, there was no cause for war.

It was not until the bronze age that evil entered people's hearts and wars started. Fear, greed and hatred ruled the earth. Next came the heroic age, when Zeus restored some human virtues in order to see heroes through the Trojan War and other semi-mythical events of early Greek history. But the worst age of all was the iron age, when weapons of iron helped people destroy each other. Yet people always lived in hope that the ages would be repeated over time: one day Cronus would return and bring back the golden age, and nature would again produce her gifts freely, snake and weed would lose their poison, goat and sheep would come home without need of a shepherd and sheep would grow fleece in different colours.

## The Trojan War

The heroic period of myth is not some remote and dateless past. It spanned only two or three generations, focusing on the Trojan War. This can be dated to the twelfth century bc: based on archaeological findings, scholars have calculated that Troy fell around 1190 bc. The reason that the myths of this period are so well known is thanks to the oral storytelling tradition, from which one man, Homer, stands out. Homer's epic poetry, especially his *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, is truly a jewel in the crown of Western literature.

The tales related by storytellers were important to Greeks because they told the story of their ancestors and glorious past. Homer's epics and other verses were widely performed and children learned them in school. They described a heroic age in which gods freely intervened in human affairs, though mortals had to know their limits. But heroes were brave and adventurous, unafraid of self-sacrifice. Thus, when the warrior-hero Achilles is offered a choice by the Fates of a long life of ease or a short one with immortal glory, he naturally chooses the latter.

Troy (called Ilium in antiquity – hence the *Iliad*) was a city located near the coast in Asia Minor (eastern Turkey). Troy was strategically important because it guarded the Hellespont Straits. The story starts with Paris of Troy who is asked to judge a beauty contest between Hera, Athene and Aphrodite. Each promises him a reward: Hera – untold wealth, Athene – wisdom and fame; and Aphrodite – the most beautiful woman in the world. Paris opts for Aphrodite, so earning Paris the eternal enmity of Hera and Athene.

Paris' prize is Helen, wife of Menelaus, King of Sparta. Enchanted by 'the face that launched a thousand ships and burned the topless towers of Ilium' (*Faustus,* Christopher Marlowe), Paris elopes with Helen to Troy. Alone among the Trojans, Paris' sister, Cassandra, foretells the destruction of Troy brought by the abduction. With his brother Agamemnon, King of Argos, Menelaus organizes a great fleet to sail to Troy. The Greeks set up camp outside Troy and besiege it for nigh on ten years. It is at this point that Homer takes up the story.

Two of the most famous Greek warriors, Achilles and Odysseus, at first refuse to join the expedition, but are finally tricked into going. Achilles is a typical Greek hero: strong and proud, but also brutal and headstrong, embodying the paradox of the hero, as seen especially in Heracles. Like many other heroes, he was brought up in the hills by the wise tutor Chiron, a centaur. His mother, hoping to make him invincible, dipped the young Achilles into the River Styx; the heel by which she held him remained the only vulnerable part of his body.

During the siege, Achilles falls out with Agamemnon over the king's acceptance of a Trojan priest's daughter, Chryseis, as war spoils. Achilles refuses to fight and lends his armour to his best friend Patroclus, who is killed in battle by the Trojan commander Hector, King Priam of Troy's

eldest son. Achilles returns to the fray bent on revenge. He pursues Hector three times round the walls of Troy and finally kills him in a sword fight. Such is Achilles' fury that he mutilates Hector's corpse and refuses to return it to Priam for burial. However, the angry gods force him to hand over the body and, recklessly, he continues fighting, before being killed by an arrow shot in his heel by Paris. In turn, Paris is killed by a Greek archer. The *Iliad* ends with the games held for Hector's funeral.

## Creatures and Monsters

Many are the horrifying monsters sent to test the strength and guile of Greek heroes – Jason, Heracles, Odysseus, Perseus, Theseus. They all have to journey to the very edge of known civilization and beyond into realms of fantasy where, time and again, they have to overcome giants, dragons, many-headed serpents, sirens, huge bulls and sea monsters of every sort.

The creatures of Greek myth are the archetypal villains of the European consciousness, rich material for the fertile imagination of artists, poets and children.

Some monsters, notably the giants, differ from men mainly in their size and ugliness. The human giants, such as the Cyclops (with one eye in the middle of their forehead), King Amycus of Bebryces (covered in thick black hair and beaten by the Argonaut Polydeuces in a boxing match) or Antacus (who is defeated by Heracles at wrestling) resemble ordinary mortals in proportions, and join in love and war with them.

Superhuman giants, on the other hand, war even with the gods and are of vastly grander proportions: Typhon, with his 100 arms, makes war on Zeus who slays him with a thunderbolt. He is so huge that it takes Mount Etna to cover the corpse. His brother Enceladus provides the flames of Mount Etna's volcano with his breath. For his part in the war against Zeus, the Titan Atlas has to hold up the heavens on his shoulders. It is Atlas' three daughters, the Hesperides, who bring Heracles the magical golden apples.

It can hardly have been coincidence that many of the monsters who test heroes are female. Oedipus (who has further troubles with women, unwittingly marrying his own mother) has a trial with the Sphinx, which has a woman's head and breasts, a lion's body and a bird's wings. The Harpies, fierce winged creatures with sharp claws, possess women's faces. These filthy beasts snatch food from the blind Phineus during Jason's

journey to Colchis. The three Gorgon sisters, led by Medusa, have writhing snakes for hair and can turn their victims to stone with a single glance. With divine aid, Perseus cuts off Medusa's head while looking at her reflection in a polished shield.

Not all female monsters are ugly brutes. Beautiful femmes fatales out to trap unwary heroes include the Sirens, half-women, half-birds, whose song so bewitches sailors that they throw themselves overboard and drown. The Argonauts escape by having Orpheus drown out their Siren song with his lyre, while Odysseus has himself bound to the mast while his sailors fill their ears with wax.

Dryope and her sister nereids (naiads), the 50 daughters of the sea god Nereus, are lovely nymphs who entice Hylas of the Argonauts down into their pool. The Amazon queen Hippolyte and Heracles' wife Deianeira both meet their end through witchcraft. The abundance of female monsters preying on men stem, it would seem, from the male fear of infidelity by wives and the belief that women are different from men in their predilection for the blacker, more orgiastic and less rational aspects of belief and ritual. Myth is a way of endorsing and defining women's natural role as loyal, obedient wives and mothers and legitimizing the male-dominated patriarchal society.

## Human Heroes and Demigods

The distinction between heroes and demigods is unclear. While some heroes, like Jason and Oedipus, are sons of mortal parents, others, like Heracles, Perseus and Achilles, come from the union of gods or goddesses with mortals. Zeus and Alcmene produced Heracles (his name 'Glory to Hera' was meant to appease Zeus' wife, the goddess Hera); Zeus and Danae produced Perseus; Peleus and the sea-nymph Thetis were responsible for Achilles; while rumours of divine intervention surround both Theseus (Poseidon is his putative father) and Odysseus (the putative bastard son of Sisyphus, offspring of Aeolus, god of winds).

Many rival states claimed a hero as their founder and protector, no doubt embellishing their origins: Theseus of Athens, Jason of Iolcos, Ajax of Salamis. Noble families also asserted a hero as their ancestor. Alexander the Great, for example, claimed descent from both Achilles and the Egyptian god Amon (Ammon) and insisted that his own semi-divine status

was recognized throughout Greece. The bards, including Homer and Hesiod, who sang for their living, often took care to extol the ancestors of their patrons and audiences.

The catalogue of ships in Homer's *Iliad* leaves no Greek state off the roll of ancient glory; the 50 Argonauts are each attributed to a noble Greek family.

The figure most akin to a national hero is Heracles. He never settled in any one city that could take full credit for his exploits, and his wanderings carried him beyond the bounds of Greece – far into Africa and Asia Minor. He was one of the earliest mythical heroes to be featured in Greek art (dating from the eighth century bc) and on the coins of city states (on which he is usually depicted strangling snakes while in his cradle). As a symbol of national patriotism he is the only hero to be revered throughout Greece; he is also the only hero to be granted immortality.

What makes Greek heroes particularly interesting is their depiction by bards as deeply complex characters. Typically, they follow a common pattern: unnatural birth, return home as prodigal sons after being separated at an early age, exploits against monsters to prove their manhood and subsequent kingship or glorious death. Super strong and courageous they may be, mostly noble and honourable, but all have to contend with a ruthless streak that often outweighs the good. Heracles, for example, hurls his wife and children into a fire in a fit of madness and his uncontrollable lust forces him on King Thespius' 50 daughters in a single night. Nor is he averse to homosexual affairs (with Hylas, for instance), though Greek pederasty is mostly excluded from the myths.

Despite recapturing the Golden Fleece for Greece, Jason never finds contentment; he deserts his wife Medea and dies when the *Argo*'s rotting prow falls on him. Theseus is also disloyal to his wife Ariadne, abandoning her on the island of Naxos; he kills his Amazon wife Antiope and causes the death both of his son Hippolytus and his father Aegeus. Even the noble and fearless Achilles, the Greek hero of the Trojan War, a man who cannot bear dishonourable conduct, violates the dead hero's code by desecrating Hector's corpse and refusing to hand it over to the Trojans.

Like the heroes, therefore, cities that turn their hero's burial places into shrines (and oracles) receive good fortune, but they also risk invoking the hero's unpredictable temper.

## Sources of Greek Myth

Greek myth has been passed down principally from song recitals and plays. In ancient Greece, myth dominated the subject matter of both. From generation to generation, professional bards known as rhapsodes committed to memory whole epics which they then passed on. The earliest of these epic poems known to us are the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, though both refer to earlier epics now lost. It was not until about 750 bc that the epics were written down for the first time.

In the middle of the eighth century bc, about the same time as the first written epics were made, a wandering minstrel by the name of Homer became the first of his profession to benefit from the new written records. His *Iliad* and *Odyssey* are narrative poems, both many hundreds of pages long, which tell the tale of Greek gods and heroes.

The *Iliad* centres on the Trojan War and, besides the warrior heroes like Achilles, Ajax, Hector and Odysseus, it describes the many gods on Mount Olympus and their various responsibilities, habits and foibles. The *Odyssey* is concerned with the hero Odysseus' ten-year journey home from the Trojan War, though the verses concentrate only on the last 40 days. It is a poem of the sea as well as land, and reaches into the realms of fable, even the underworld, introducing us to the lotus-eaters, Cyclops, Sirens, Scylla and Charybdis.

Both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* constitute truly great literature and encapsulate virtually all we know of Greek mythology. Ironically, our knowledge of their author is extremely sketchy. The many ancient accounts of the life of 'The Poet', as he was simply known, have him as a blind bard from Chios, born about 750 bc (Herodotus), but there is absolutely no evidence to verify this. We do not even know if he could read or write. All we can say is that, then as now, the epics ascribed to Homer emanate from a unique interaction between tradition and individual talent.

The other great rhapsodist was Hesiod, who was composing poems and winning singing competitions about 50 years after Homer, in 700 bc. Not only was he evidently the first to write his songs down, in his main epics *Theogony* and *Works and Days*, he was the first author of a systematic mythology. It is from Hesiod that we learn of the creation, the beginning

of the gods and the world. Although Hesiod gives no account of the creation of humanity, he does tell us of Prometheus and Pandora.

Both Homer and Hesiod were born in Asia Minor, and their interpretations of mythology show many similarities with ancient Sumerian and other Near Eastern civilizations (the Phoenicians, Hurrians and Hittites). Nowhere else, however, have myths attained such a peak of written excellence as in the Greek epics.

Philosophers later challenged a literal belief in mythology. The great philosopher Plato (427–347 bc), an aristocratic Athenian, especially criticizes many of the myths immortalized by Homer and Hesiod for presenting gods and heroes as morally flawed and vengeful characters. Such characters would have had no place in his ideal society, which he describes in the *Republic*. In his work the Timaeus, he provides his own cosmology.

What all the epic bards, dramatists and philosophers show is that Greek mythology was ever changing, giving rise to yet more exciting artistic productions in every area of creativity.

## The Underworld

The afterlife was of great importance to the ancient Greeks. Beyond the grave or funeral pyre lay a land of shadows, the underworld. It was ruled by Hades, brother of Zeus and Poseidon, who also gave his name to his dark realm. Because the gloomy underworld was opposed to bright heavenly Olympus, Hades was not accepted as an Olympian god, and his servants were never invited to sup in Zeus' palace.

Dead souls are taken by Hermes, messenger of the gods, down through gloomy caves and long, winding, underground paths until they come to five rivers. First they must be ferried by Charon across the black River Styx (hate) to the Gates of Hades, which are guarded by the three-headed hound Cerberus. Once inside they must then cross four more rivers: black Acheron (woe), Phlegethon (fire), salt-teared Cocytus (wailing) and Lethe (oblivion). Unless the soul has money (put in the corpse's mouth) to pay the ferryman, the ghost will be left to wander for 100 years on the far side of the Styx.

Once across the five infernal rivers, the dead go before three stern judges: Minos, Rhadamanthus and Aeacus, who help Hades assess

people’s lives and determine their fate. Exceptional heroes might find themselves assigned to the blissful Elysian Fields, also known as the Isles of the Blessed, far off in the western seas where they can relive the joys of life without memory of their sins. For those whose crimes are bad enough to warrant a sentence to eternal punishment, there are special torments in the darkest regions of Erebus and Tartarus, where they are deprived of oblivion, being eternally reminded of their sins. This is true of King Tantalus who stole nectar and ambrosia from the gods: his punishment was to find that food and drink are always just beyond his grasp (hence our word ‘tantalise’). Those who have done evil are also handed over to the three merciless Furies (Erinyes) before being led off to their appointed torment.

For the common dead, neither very good or very bad, their sad fate is to dwell forever in shadowy gloom. On occasion they may gain a glimpse of the strange garden of Persephone, queen of the underworld, with its bloomless poppies, pale beds of rushes and green grapes, which she crushes into deadly wine.

Few heroes or gods manage to venture down into Hades and return. Those that do often meet a sad fate. The three best-known figures to achieve this are Heracles, Orpheus and Persephone. Heracles’ last test is to bring up the hound Cerberus. He is led by Hermes to a cave near Sparta from where he descends into Hades, passing the Fates and Furies, eventually coming to the gloomy palace of King Hades and Queen Persephone. Hades gives him the hound to see if he can overcome it with his bare hands. He does so, but returns it to Hades having accomplished his mission.

Orpheus, the greatest of all singers, is grief-stricken when his beloved wife Eurydice dies. So he goes with his lyre into the underworld and persuades Hades to let Eurydice return to earth. Hades agrees but there is one condition: Orpheus must not look back as he leads his wife out. Sadly, at the exit, he looks round at her and she has to return to Hades forever. In his grief he pledges never to remarry and a band of women suitors angrily cut him to pieces. Yet even after his death his head and lyre continue to sing and play.

# THE BEGINNING

## Introduction

**AMONG ALL THE NATIONS** scattered over the face of the earth, the Hebrews alone were instructed by God, who gave them not only a full account of the creation of the world and of all living creatures, but also a code of laws to regulate their conduct. All the questions they fain would ask were fully answered, and no room remained for conjecture.

It was not so, however, with the other nations. The Greeks, for instance, lacking the definite knowledge which we obtain from the Scriptures, and still anxious to know everything, were forced to construct, in part, their own theory. As they looked about them for some clue to serve as guide, they could not help but observe and admire the wonders of nature. The succession of day and night, summer and winter, rain and sunshine; the fact that the tallest trees sprang from tiny seeds, the greatest rivers from diminutive streams, and the most beautiful flowers and delicious fruits from small green buds – all seemed to tell them of a superior Being, who had fashioned them to serve a definite purpose.

They soon came to the conclusion that a hand mighty enough to call all these wonders into life, could also have created the beautiful Earth whereon they dwelt. These thoughts gave rise to others; suppositions became certainties; and soon the following myth or fable was evolved, to be handed down from generation to generation.

# Chaos and Nyx

**AT FIRST**, when all things lay in a great confused mass, the Earth did not exist. Land, sea, and air were mixed up together; so that the earth was not solid, the sea was not fluid, nor the air transparent.

Over this shapeless mass reigned a careless deity called Chaos, whose personal appearance could not be described, as there was no light by which he could be seen. He shared his throne with his wife, the dark goddess of Night, named Nyx or Nox, whose black robes, and still blacker countenance, did not tend to enliven the surrounding gloom.

These two divinities wearied of their power in the course of time, and called their son Erebus (Darkness) to their assistance. His first act was to dethrone and supplant Chaos; and then, thinking he would be happier with a helpmeet, he married his own mother, Nyx. Of course, with our present views, this marriage was a heinous sin; but the ancients, who at first had no fixed laws, did not consider this union unsuitable, and recounted how Erebus and Nyx ruled over the chaotic world together, until their two beautiful children, Aether (Light) and Hemera (Day), acting in concert, dethroned them, and seized the supreme power.

Space, illumined for the first time by their radiance, revealed itself in all its uncouthness. Aether and Hemera carefully examined the confusion, saw its innumerable possibilities, and decided to evolve from it a ‘thing of beauty;’ but quite conscious of the magnitude of such an undertaking, and feeling that some assistance would be desirable, they summoned Eros (Love), their own child, to their aid. By their combined efforts, Pontus (the Sea) and Gaea (Ge, Tellus, Terra), as the Earth was first called, were created.

In the beginning the Earth did not present the beautiful appearance that it does now. No trees waved their leafy branches on the hillsides; no flowers bloomed in the valleys; no grass grew on the plains; no birds flew through the air. All was silent, bare, and motionless. Eros, the first to perceive these deficiencies, seized his life-giving arrows and pierced the cold bosom of the Earth. Immediately the brown surface was covered with

luxuriant verdure; birds of many colours flitted through the foliage of the new-born forest trees; animals of all kinds gamboled over the grassy plains; and swift-darting fishes swam in the limpid streams. All was now life, joy, and motion.

Gaea, roused from her apathy, admired all that had already been done for her embellishment, and, resolving to crown and complete the work so well begun, created Uranus (Heaven).

# The Egg Myth

**THIS VERSION** of the creation of the world, although but one of the many current with the Greeks and Romans, was the one most generally adopted; but another, also very popular, stated that the first divinities, Erebus and Nyx, produced a gigantic egg, from which Eros, the god of love, emerged to create the Earth.

The Earth thus created was supposed by the ancients to be a disk, instead of a sphere as science has proved. The Greeks fancied that their country occupied a central position, and that Mount Olympus, a very high mountain, the mythological abode of their gods, was placed in the exact centre. Their Earth was divided into two equal parts by Pontus (the Sea – equivalent to our Mediterranean and Black Seas); and all around it flowed the great river Oceanus in a ‘steady, equable current,’ undisturbed by storm, from which the Sea and all the rivers were supposed to derive their waters.

The Greeks also imagined that the portion of the Earth directly north of their country was inhabited by a fortunate race of men, the Hyperboreans, who dwelt in continual bliss, and enjoyed a never-ending springtide. Their homes were said to be ‘inaccessible by land or by sea.’ They were ‘exempt from disease, old age, and death,’ and were so virtuous that the gods frequently visited them, and even condescended to share their feasts and games. A people thus favoured could not fail to be happy, and many were the songs in praise of their sunny land.

South of Greece, also near the great river Oceanus, dwelt another nation, just as happy and virtuous as the Hyperboreans – the Ethiopians. They, too, often enjoyed the company of the gods, who shared their innocent pleasures with great delight.

And far away, on the shore of this same marvelous river, according to some mythologists, were the beautiful Isles of the Blest, where mortals who had led virtuous lives, and had thus found favour in the sight of the gods, were transported without tasting of death, and where they enjoyed an eternity of bliss. These islands had sun, moon, and stars of their own, and

were never visited by the cold wintry winds that swept down from the north.

# The Titans

**CHAOS, EREBUS AND NYX** were deprived of their power by Aether and Hemera, who did not long enjoy the possession of the sceptre; for Uranus and Gaea, more powerful than their progenitors, soon forced them to depart, and began to reign in their stead. They had not dwelt long on the summit of Mount Olympus, before they found themselves the parents of twelve gigantic children, the Titans, whose strength was such that their father, Uranus, greatly feared them. To prevent their ever making use of it against him, he seized them immediately after their birth, hurled them down into a dark abyss called Tartarus, and there chained them fast.

This chasm was situated far under the earth; and Uranus knew that his six sons (Oceanus, Coeus, Crius, Hyperion, Iapetus, and Cronus), as well as his six daughters, the Titanides (Ilia, Rhea, Themis, Thetis, Mnemosyne, and Phoebe), could not easily escape from its cavernous depths. The Titans did not long remain sole occupants of Tartarus, for one day the brazen doors were again thrown wide open to admit the Cyclopes – Brontes (Thunder), Steropes (Lightning), and Arges (Sheet-lightning) – three later-born children of Uranus and Gaea, who helped the Titans to make the darkness hideous with their incessant clamor for freedom. In due time their number was increased by the three terrible Centimani (Hundred-handed), Cottus, Briareus, and Gyes, who were sent thither by Uranus to share their fate.

Greatly dissatisfied with the treatment her children had received at their father’s hands, Gaea remonstrated, but all in vain. Uranus would not grant her request to set the giants free, and, whenever their muffled cries reached his ear, he trembled for his own safety. Angry beyond all expression, Gaea swore revenge, and descended into Tartarus, where she urged the Titans to conspire against their father, and attempt to wrest the sceptre from his grasp.

All listened attentively to the words of sedition; but none were courageous enough to carry out her plans, except Cronus, the youngest of the Titans, more familiarly known as Saturn or Time, who found

confinement and chains peculiarly galling, and who hated his father for his cruelty. Gaea finally induced him to lay violent hands upon his sire, and, after releasing him from his bonds, gave him a scythe, and bade him be of good cheer and return victorious.

Thus armed and admonished, Cronus set forth, came upon his father unawares, defeated him, thanks to his extraordinary weapon, and, after binding him fast, took possession of the vacant throne, intending to rule the universe forever. Enraged at this insult, Uranus cursed his son, and prophesied that a day would come when he, too, would be supplanted by his children, and would suffer just punishment for his rebellion.

Cronus paid no heed to his father’s imprecations, but calmly proceeded to release the Titans, his brothers and sisters, who, in their joy and gratitude to escape the dismal realm of Tartarus, expressed their willingness to be ruled by him. Their satisfaction was complete, however, when he chose his own sister Rhea (Cybele, Ops) for his consort, and assigned to each of the others some portion of the world to govern at will. To Oceanus and Thetis, for example, he gave charge over the ocean and all the rivers upon earth; while to Hyperion and Phoebe he entrusted the direction of the sun and moon, which the ancients supposed were daily driven across the sky in brilliant golden chariots.

# The Birth of Zeus

**PEACE AND SECURITY** now reigned on and around Mount Olympus; and Cronus, with great satisfaction, congratulated himself on the result of his enterprise. One fine morning, however, his equanimity was disturbed by the announcement that a son was born to him. The memory of his father's curse then suddenly returned to his mind. Anxious to avert so great a calamity as the loss of his power, he hastened to his wife, determined to devour the child, and thus prevent him from causing further annoyance. Wholly unsuspicious, Rhea heard him enquire for his son. Gladly she placed him in his extended arms; but imagine her surprise and horror when she beheld her husband swallow the babe!

Time passed, and another child was born, but only to meet with the same cruel fate. One infant after another disappeared down the capacious throat of the voracious Cronus – a personification of Time, who creates only to destroy. In vain the bereaved mother besought the life of one little one: the selfish, hard-hearted father would not relent. As her prayers seemed unavailing, Rhea finally resolved to obtain by stratagem the boon her husband denied; and as soon as her youngest son, Zeus, was born, she concealed him.

Cronus, aware of his birth, soon made his appearance, determined to dispose of him in the usual summary manner. For some time Rhea pleaded with him, but at last pretended to yield to his commands. Hastily wrapping a large stone in swaddling clothes, she handed it to Cronus, simulating intense grief. Cronus was evidently not of a very inquiring turn of mind, for he swallowed the whole without investigating the real contents of the shapeless bundle.

Ignorant of the deception practiced upon him, Cronus then took leave, and the overjoyed mother clasped her rescued treasure to her breast. It was not sufficient, however, to have saved young Zeus from imminent death: it was also necessary that his father should remain unconscious of his existence.

To ensure this, Rhea entrusted her babe to the tender care of the Melian nymphs, who bore him off to a cave on Mount Ida. There a goat, Amalthea, was procured to act as nurse, and fulfilled her office so acceptably that she was eventually placed in the heavens as a constellation, a brilliant reward for her kind ministrations. To prevent Zeus' cries being heard in Olympus, the Curetes (Corybantes), Rhea's priests, uttered piercing screams, clashed their weapons, executed fierce dances, and chanted rude war songs.

The real significance of all this unwonted noise and commotion was not at all understood by Cronus, who, in the intervals of his numerous affairs, congratulated himself upon the cunning he had shown to prevent the accomplishment of his father's curse. But all his anxiety and fears were aroused when he suddenly became aware of the fraud practiced upon him, and of young Zeus' continued existence. He immediately tried to devise some plan to get rid of him; but, before he could put it into execution, he found himself attacked, and, after a short but terrible encounter, signally defeated.

Zeus, delighted to have triumphed so quickly, took possession of the supreme power, and aided by Rhea's counsels, and by a nauseous potion prepared by Metis, a daughter of Oceanus, compelled Cronus to produce the unfortunate children he had swallowed; i.e., Poseidon, Hades, Hestia, Demeter and Hera.

Following the example of his predecessor, Zeus gave his brothers and sisters a fair share of his new kingdom. The wisest among the Titans – Mnemosyne, Themis, Oceanus and Hyperion – submitted to the new sovereign without murmur, but the others refused their allegiance; which refusal, of course, occasioned a deadly conflict.

# The Giants’ War

*Johann August Apel*

**ZEUS, FROM THE TOP** of Mount Olympus, discerned the superior number of his foes, and, quite aware of their might, concluded that reinforcements to his party would not be superfluous. In haste, therefore, he released the Cyclopes from Tartarus, where they had languished so long, stipulating that in exchange for their freedom they should supply him with thunderbolts – weapons which only they knew how to forge. This new engine caused great terror and dismay in the ranks of the enemy, who, nevertheless, soon rallied, and struggled valiantly to overthrow the usurper and win back the sovereignty of the world.

During ten long years the war raged incessantly, neither party wishing to submit to the dominion of the other, but at the end of that time the rebellious Titans were obliged to yield. Some of them were hurled into Tartarus once more, where they were carefully secured by Poseidon, Zeus’ brother, while the young conqueror joyfully proclaimed his victory.

The scene of this mighty conflict was supposed to have been in Thessaly, where the country bears the imprint of some great natural convulsion; for the ancients imagined that the gods, making the most of their gigantic strength and stature, hurled huge rocks at each other, and piled mountain upon mountain to reach the abode of Zeus, the Thunderer.

Cronus, the leader and instigator of the revolt, weary at last of bloodshed and strife, withdrew to Italy, or Hesperia, where he founded a prosperous kingdom, and reigned in peace for many long years.

Zeus, having disposed of all the Titans, now fancied he would enjoy the power so unlawfully obtained; but Gaea, to punish him for depriving her children of their birthright, created a terrible monster, called Typhoeus, or Typhon, which she sent to attack him. He was a giant, from whose trunk one hundred dragon heads arose; flames shot from his eyes, nostrils, and mouths; while he incessantly uttered such blood-curdling screams, that the gods, in terror, fled from Mount Olympus and sought refuge in Egypt. In

mortal fear lest this terror-inspiring monster would pursue them, the gods there assumed the forms of different animals; and Zeus became a ram, while Hera, his sister and queen, changed herself into a cow.

The king of the gods, however, soon became ashamed of his cowardly flight, and resolved to return to Mount Olympus to slay Typhoeus with his terrible thunderbolts. A long and fierce struggle ensued, at the end of which, Zeus, again victorious, viewed his fallen foe with boundless pride; but his triumph was very short-lived.

Enceladus, another redoubtable giant, also created by Gaea, now appeared to avenge Typhoeus. He too was signally defeated, and bound with adamantine chains in a burning cave under Mount Etna. In early times, before he had become accustomed to his prison, he gave vent to his rage by outcries, imprecations, and groans: sometimes he even breathed forth fire and flames, in hopes of injuring his conqueror. But time, it is said, somewhat cooled his resentment; and now he is content with an occasional change of position, which, owing to his huge size, causes the earth to tremble over a space of many miles, producing what is called an earthquake.

Zeus had now conquered all his foes, asserted his right to the throne, and could at last reign over the world undisturbed; but he knew that it would be no small undertaking to rule well heaven, earth, and sea, and resolved to divide the power with his brothers. To avoid quarrels and recriminations, he portioned the world out into lots, allowing each of his brothers the privilege of drawing his own share.

Poseidon thus obtained control over the sea and all the rivers, and immediately expressed his resolve to wear a symbolic crown, composed exclusively of marine shells and aquatic plants, and to abide within the bounds of his watery realm.

Hades, the most taciturn of the brothers, received for his portion the sceptre of Tartarus and all the Lower World, where no beam of sunlight was ever allowed to find its way; while Zeus reserved for himself the general supervision of his brothers’ estates, and the direct management of Heaven and Earth.

Peace now reigned throughout all the world. Not a murmur was heard, except from the Titans, who at length, seeing that further opposition would be useless, grew reconciled to their fate.

In the days of their prosperity, the Titans had intermarried. Cronus had taken Rhea ‘for better or for worse;’ and Iapetus had seen, loved, and wedded the fair Clymene, one of the ocean nymphs, or Oceanides, daughters of Oceanus. The latter pair became the proud parents of four gigantic sons – Atlas, Menetius, Prometheus (Forethought), and Epimetheus (Afterthought) – who were destined to play prominent parts in Grecian mythology.

# Prometheus

**AT THE TIME** of the creation, after covering the new-born Earth with luxuriant vegetation, and peopling it with living creatures of all kinds, Eros perceived that it would be necessary to endow them with instincts which would enable them to preserve and enjoy the life they had received. He therefore called the youngest two sons of Iapetus to his aid, and bade them make a judicious distribution of gifts to all living creatures, and create and endow a superior being, called Man, to rule over all the others.

Prometheus' and Epimetheus' first care was, very naturally, to provide for the beings already created. These they endowed with such reckless generosity, that all their favours were soon dispensed, and none remained for the endowment of man. Although they had not the remotest idea how to overcome this difficulty, they proceeded to fashion man from clay.

They first moulded an image similar in form to the gods; bade Eros breathe into its nostrils the spirit of life, and Athene endow it with a soul; whereupon man lived, and moved, and viewed his new domain.

Justly proud of his handiwork, Prometheus observed man, and longed to bestow upon him some great power, unshared by any other creature of mortal birth, which would raise him far above all other living beings, and bring him nearer to the perfection of the immortal gods. Fire alone, in his estimation, could effect this; but fire was the special possession and prerogative of the gods, and Prometheus knew they would never willingly share it with man, and that, should any one obtain it by stealth, they would never forgive the thief. Long he pondered the matter, and finally determined to obtain fire, or die in the attempt.

One dark night, therefore, he set out for Olympus, entered unperceived into the gods' abode, seized a lighted brand, hid it in his bosom, and departed unseen, exulting in the success of his enterprise. Arrived upon earth once more, he consigned the stolen treasure to the care of man, who immediately adapted it to various purposes, and eloquently expressed his gratitude to the benevolent deity who had risked his own life to obtain it for him.

From his lofty throne on the topmost peak of Mount Olympus Zeus beheld an unusual light down upon earth. Anxious to ascertain its exact nature, he watched it closely, and before long discovered the larceny. His anger then burst forth, terrible to behold; and the gods all quailed when they heard him solemnly vow he would punish the unhappy Prometheus without mercy. To seize the offender in his mighty grasp, bear him off to the Caucasian Mountains, and bind him fast to a great rock, was but a moment's work. There a voracious vulture was summoned to feast upon his liver, the tearing of which from his side by the bird's cruel beak and talons caused the sufferer intense anguish. All day long the vulture gorged himself; but during the cool night, while the bird slept, Prometheus' suffering abated, and the liver grew again, thus prolonging the torture, which bade fair to have no end.

Disheartened by the prospect of long years of unremitting pain, Prometheus at times could not refrain from pitiful complaints; but generation after generation of men lived on earth, and died, blessing him for the gift he had obtained for them at such a terrible cost. After many centuries of woe, Hercules, son of Zeus and Alcmene, found Prometheus, killed the vulture, broke the adamantine chains, and liberated the long-suffering god.

The first mortals lived on earth in a state of perfect innocence and bliss. The air was pure and balmy; the sun shone brightly all the year; the earth brought forth delicious fruit in abundance; and beautiful, fragrant flowers bloomed everywhere. Man was content. Extreme cold, hunger, sickness, and death were unknown. Zeus, who justly ascribed a good part of this beatific condition to the gift conferred by Prometheus, was greatly displeased, and tried to devise some means to punish mankind for the acceptance of the heavenly fire.

With this purpose in view, he assembled the gods on Mount Olympus, where, in solemn council, they decided to create woman; and, as soon as she had been artfully fashioned, each one endowed her with some special charm, to make her more attractive.

Their united efforts were crowned with the utmost success. Nothing was lacking, except a name for the peerless creature; and the gods, after due consideration, decreed she should be called Pandora. They then bade Hermes take her to Prometheus as a gift from heaven; but he, knowing

only too well that nothing good would come to him from the gods, refused to accept her, and cautioned his brother Epimetheus to follow his example. Unfortunately Epimetheus was of a confiding disposition, and when he beheld the maiden he exclaimed, “Surely so beautiful and gentle a being can bring no evil!” and accepted her most joyfully.

The first days of their union were spent in blissful wanderings, hand in hand, under the cool forest shade; in weaving garlands of fragrant flowers; and in refreshing themselves with the luscious fruit, which hung so temptingly within reach.

# Pandora

**ONE LOVELY EVENING**, while dancing on the green, they saw Hermes, Zeus' messenger, coming towards them. His step was slow and weary, his garments dusty and travel-stained, and he seemed almost to stagger beneath the weight of a huge box which rested upon his shoulders. Pandora immediately ceased dancing, to speculate with feminine curiosity upon the contents of the chest. She nudged Epimetheus, and in a whisper begged him to ask Hermes what brought him thither. Epimetheus complied with her request; but Hermes evaded the question, asked permission to deposit his burden in their dwelling for safekeeping, professing himself too weary to convey it to its destination that day, and promised to call for it shortly. The permission was promptly granted. Hermes, with a sigh of relief, placed the box in one corner, and then departed, refusing all hospitable offers of rest and refreshment.

He had scarcely crossed the threshold, when Pandora expressed a strong desire to have a peep at the contents of the mysterious box; but Epimetheus, surprised and shocked, told her that her curiosity was unseemly, and then, to dispel the frown and pout seen for the first time on the fair face of his beloved, he entreated her to come out into the fresh air and join in the merry games of their companions. For the first time, also, Pandora refused to comply with his request. Dismayed, and very much discouraged, Epimetheus sauntered out alone, thinking she would soon join him, and perhaps by some caress atone for her present willfulness.

Left alone with the mysterious casket, Pandora became more and more inquisitive. Stealthily she drew near, and examined it with great interest, for it was curiously wrought of dark wood, and surmounted by a delicately carved head, of such fine workmanship that it seemed to smile and encourage her. Around the box a glittering golden cord was wound, and fastened on top in an intricate knot. Pandora, who prided herself specially on her deft fingers, felt sure she could unfasten it, and, reasoning that it would not be indiscreet to untie it if she did not raise the lid, she set to work. Long she strove, but all in vain. Ever and anon the laughing voices

of Epimetheus and his companions, playing in the luxuriant shade, were wafted in on the summer breeze. Repeatedly she heard them call, and beseech her to join them; yet she persisted in her attempt. She was just on the point of giving it up in despair, when suddenly the refractory knot yielded to her fumbling fingers, and the cord, unrolling, dropped on the floor.

Pandora had repeatedly fancied that sounds like whispers issued from the box. The noise now seemed to increase, and she breathlessly applied her ear to the lid to ascertain whether it really proceeded from within. Imagine, therefore, her surprise when she distinctly heard these words, uttered in the most pitiful accents: “Pandora, dear Pandora, have pity upon us! Free us from this gloomy prison! Open, open, we beseech you!”

Pandora’s heart beat so fast and loud, that it seemed for a moment to drown all other sounds. Should she open the box? Just then a familiar step outside made her start guiltily. Epimetheus was coming, and she knew he would urge her again to come out, and would prevent the gratification of her curiosity. Precipitately, therefore, she raised the lid to have one little peep before he came in.

Now, Zeus had malignantly crammed into this box all the diseases, sorrows, vices, and crimes that afflict poor humanity; and the box was no sooner opened, than all these ills flew out, in the guise of horrid little brown-winged creatures, closely resembling moths. These little insects fluttered about, alighting, some upon Epimetheus, who had just entered, and some upon Pandora, pricking and stinging them most unmercifully. Then they flew out through the open door and windows, and fastened upon the merrymakers without, whose shouts of joy were soon changed into wails of pain and anguish.

Epimetheus and Pandora had never before experienced the faintest sensation of pain or anger; but, as soon as these winged evil spirits had stung them, they began to weep, and, alas! quarreled for the first time in their lives. Epimetheus reproached his wife in bitterest terms for her thoughtless action; but in the very midst of his vituperation he suddenly heard a sweet little voice entreat for freedom. The sound proceeded from the unfortunate box, whose cover Pandora had dropped again, in the first moment of her surprise and pain. “Open, open, and I will heal your wounds! Please let me out!” it pleaded.

The tearful couple viewed each other inquiringly, and listened again. Once more they heard the same pitiful accents; and Epimetheus bade his wife open the box and set the speaker free, adding very amiably, that she had already done so much harm by her ill-fated curiosity, that it would be difficult to add materially to its evil consequences, and that, perchance, the box contained some good spirit, whose ministrations might prove beneficial.

It was well for Pandora that she opened the box a second time, for the gods, with a sudden impulse of compassion, had concealed among the evil spirits one kindly creature, Hope, whose mission was to heal the wounds inflicted by her fellow-prisoners.

Lightly fluttering hither and thither on her snowy pinions, Hope touched the punctured places on Pandora’s and Epimetheus’ creamy skin, and relieved their suffering, then quickly flew out of the open window, to perform the same gentle office for the other victims, and cheer their downcast spirits.

Thus, according to the ancients, evil entered into the world, bringing untold misery; but Hope followed closely in its footsteps, to aid struggling humanity, and point to a happier future.

During many centuries, therefore, Hope continued to be revered, although the other divinities had ceased to be worshiped.

According to another version, Pandora was sent down to man, bearing a vase in which the evil spirits were imprisoned, and on the way, seized by a fit of curiosity, raised the cover, and allowed them all to escape.

# The Great Deluge

**LITTLE BY LITTLE** the world was peopled; and the first years of man's existence upon earth were, as we have seen, years of unalloyed happiness. There was no occasion for labour, for the earth brought forth spontaneously all that was necessary for man's subsistence. 'Innocence, virtue, and truth prevailed; neither were there any laws to restrict men, nor judges to punish.' This time of bliss has justly borne the title of Golden Age, and the people in Italy then throve under the wise rule of good old Saturn, or Cronus.

Unfortunately, nothing in this world is lasting; and the Golden Age was followed by another, not quite so prosperous, hence called the Silver Age, when the year was first divided into seasons, and men were obliged to toil for their daily bread.

Yet, in spite of these few hardships, the people were happy, far happier than their descendants during the Age of Brass, which speedily followed, when strife became customary, and differences were settled by blows. But by far the worst of all was the Iron Age, when men's passions knew no bounds, and they even dared refuse all homage to the immortal gods. War was waged incessantly; the earth was saturated with blood; the rights of hospitality were openly violated; and murder, rape, and theft were committed on all sides.

Zeus had kept a close watch over men's actions during all these years; and this evil conduct aroused his wrath to such a point, that he vowed he would annihilate the human race. But the modes of destruction were manifold, and, as he could not decide which would eventually prove most efficacious, he summoned the gods to deliberate and aid him by their counsels. The first suggestion offered, was to destroy the world by fire, kindled by Zeus' much-dreaded thunderbolts; and the king of gods was about to put it into instant execution, when his arm was stayed by the objection that the rising flames might set fire to his own abode, and reduce its magnificence to unsightly ashes. He therefore rejected the plan as impracticable, and bade the gods devise other means of destruction.

After much delay and discussion, the immortals agreed to wash mankind off the face of the earth by a mighty deluge. The winds were instructed to gather together the rain clouds over the earth. Poseidon let loose the waves of the sea, bidding them rise, overflow, and deluge the land. No sooner had the gods spoken, than the elements obeyed: the winds blew; the rain fell in torrents; lakes, seas, rivers, and oceans broke their bonds; and terrified mortals, forgetting their petty quarrels in a common impulse to flee from the death which threatened them, climbed the highest mountains, clung to uprooted trees, and even took refuge in the light skiffs they had constructed in happier days. Their efforts were all in vain, however; for the waters rose higher and higher, overtook them one after another in their ineffectual efforts to escape, closed over the homes where they might have been so happy, and drowned their last despairing cries in their seething depths.

The rain continued to fall, until, after many days, the waves covered all the surface of the earth except the summit of Mount Parnassus, the highest peak in Greece. On this mountain, surrounded by the ever-rising flood, stood the son of Prometheus, Deucalion, with his faithful wife Pyrrha, a daughter of Epimetheus and Pandora. From thence they, the sole survivors, viewed the universal desolation with tear-dimmed eyes.

In spite of the general depravity, the lives of this couple had always been pure and virtuous; and when Zeus saw them there alone, and remembered their piety, he decided not to include them in the general destruction, but to save their lives. He therefore bade the winds return to their cave, and the rain to cease. Poseidon, in accordance with his decree, blew a resounding blast upon his conch shell to recall the wandering waves, which immediately returned within their usual bounds.

Deucalion and Pyrrha followed the receding waves step by step down the steep mountain side, wondering how they should re-people the desolate earth. As they talked, they came to the shrine of Delphi, which alone had been able to resist the force of the waves.

There they entered to consult the wishes of the gods. Their surprise and horror were unbounded, however, when a voice exclaimed, “Depart from hence with veiled heads, and cast your mother’s bones behind you!”

To obey such a command seemed sacrilegious in the extreme; for the dead had always been held in deep veneration by the Greeks, and the

desecration of a grave was considered a heinous crime, and punished accordingly. But, they reasoned, the gods' oracles can seldom be accepted in a literal sense; and Deucalion, after due thought, explained to Pyrrha what he conceived to be the meaning of this mysterious command.

"The Earth," said he, "is the mother of all, and the stones may be considered her bones." Husband and wife speedily decided to act upon this premise, and continued their descent, casting stones behind them. All those thrown by Deucalion were immediately changed into men, while those cast by Pyrrha became women.

Thus the earth was peopled for the second time with a blameless race of men, sent to replace the wicked beings slain by Zeus. Deucalion and Pyrrha shortly after became the happy parents of a son named Hellen, who gave his name to all the Hellenic or Greek race; while his sons Aeolus and Dorus, and grandsons Ion and Achaeus, became the ancestors of the Aeolian, Dorian, Ionian, and Achaian nations.

Other mythologists, in treating of the deluvian myths, state that Deucalion and Pyrrha took refuge in an ark, which, after sailing about for many days, was stranded on the top of Mount Parnassus. This version was far less popular with the Greeks, although it betrays still more plainly the common source whence all these myths are derived.

# The Major Olympian Gods

## Introduction

**IT WAS COMMONLY BELIEVED** that 12 deities, also known as the ‘Dodekatheon’, occupied the pantheon atop Mount Olympus. To gain their supreme positions they fought in a war lasting ten years in which Zeus and his siblings overcame the Titans. Though the composition varied amongst different representations, the 12 were most commonly portrayed as including Zeus, Hera, Poseidon, Demeter, Athene, Apollo, Artemis, Ares, Aphrodite, Hephaestus, Hermes, and either Hestia, or Dionysus. All of the Olympian Gods were related in various ways and ruled together, meeting in regular counsels. This chapter covers the lives and attributes of these Gods and how they were worshipped by the Greeks.

# Zeus

**ZEUS, THE GREAT** presiding deity of the universe, the ruler of heaven and earth, was regarded by the Greeks, first, as the god of all aerial phenomena; secondly, as the personification of the laws of nature; thirdly, as lord of state-life; and fourthly, as the father of gods and men.

As the god of aerial phenomena he could, by shaking his aegis, produce storms, tempests, and intense darkness. At his command the mighty thunder rolls, the lightning flashes, and the clouds open and pour forth their refreshing streams to fructify the earth.

As the personification of the operations of nature, he represents those grand laws of unchanging and harmonious order, by which not only the physical but also the moral world is governed. Hence he is the god of regulated time as marked by the changing seasons, and by the regular succession of day and night, in contradistinction to his father Cronus, who represents time absolutely, *i.e.* eternity.

As the lord of state-life, he is the founder of kingly power, the upholder of all institutions connected with the state, and the special friend and patron of princes, whom he guards and assists with his advice and counsel. He protects the assembly of the people, and, in fact, watches over the welfare of the whole community.

As the father of the gods, Zeus sees that each deity performs his or her individual duty, punishes their misdeeds, settles their disputes, and acts towards them on all occasions as their all-knowing counsellor and mighty friend.

As the father of men, he takes a paternal interest in the actions and well-being of mortals. He watches over them with tender solicitude, rewarding truth, charity, and uprightness, but severely punishing perjury, cruelty, and want of hospitality. Even the poorest and most forlorn wanderer finds in him a powerful advocate, for he, by a wise and merciful dispensation, ordains that the mighty ones of the earth should succour their distressed and needy brethren.

The Greeks believed that the home of this their mighty and all-powerful deity was on the top of Mount Olympus, that high and lofty mountain between Thessaly and Macedon, whose summit, wrapped in clouds and mist, was hidden from mortal view. It was supposed that this mysterious region, which even a bird could not reach, extended beyond the clouds right into Aether, the realm of the immortal gods. The poets describe this ethereal atmosphere as bright, glistening, and refreshing, exercising a peculiar, gladdening influence over the minds and hearts of those privileged beings permitted to share its delights. Here youth never ages, and the passing years leave no traces on its favoured inhabitants. On the cloud-capped summit of Olympus was the palace of Zeus and Hera, of burnished gold, chased silver, and gleaming ivory. Lower down were the homes of the other gods, which, though less commanding in position and size, were yet similar to that of Zeus in design and workmanship, all being the work of the divine artist Hephaestus. Below these were other palaces of silver, ebony, ivory, or burnished brass, where the Heroes, or Demi-gods, resided.

## Worshipping Zeus

As the worship of Zeus formed so important a feature in the religion of the Greeks, his statues were necessarily both numerous and magnificent. He is usually represented as a man of noble and imposing mien, his countenance expressing all the lofty majesty of the omnipotent ruler of the universe, combined with the gracious, yet serious, benignity of the father and friend of mankind. He may be recognized by his rich flowing beard, and the thick masses of hair, which rise straight from the high and intellectual forehead and fall to his shoulders in clustering locks. The nose is large and finely formed, and the slightly-opened lips impart an air of sympathetic kindliness which invites confidence. He is always accompanied by an eagle, which either surmounts his sceptre, or sits at his feet; he generally bears in his uplifted hand a sheaf of thunder-bolts, just ready to be hurled, whilst in the other he holds the lightning. The head is frequently encircled with a wreath of oak-leaves.

The most celebrated statue of the Olympian Zeus was that by the famous Athenian sculptor Phidias, which was forty feet high, and stood in the temple of Zeus at Olympia. It was formed of ivory and gold, and was such

a masterpiece of art, that it was reckoned among the seven wonders of the world. It represented the god, seated on a throne, holding in his right hand a life-sized image of Nike (the goddess of Victory), and in his left a royal sceptre, surmounted by an eagle. It is said that the great sculptor had concentrated all the marvellous powers of his genius on this sublime conception, and earnestly entreated Zeus to give him a decided proof that his labours were approved. An answer to his prayer came through the open roof of the temple in the shape of a flash of lightning, which Phidias interpreted as a sign that the god of heaven was pleased with his work.

Zeus was first worshipped at Dodona in Epirus, where, at the foot of Mount Tomarus, on the woody shore of Lake Joanina, was his famous oracle, the most ancient in Greece. Here the voice of the eternal and invisible god was supposed to be heard in the rustling leaves of a giant oak, announcing to mankind the will of heaven and the destiny of mortals; these revelations being interpreted to the people by the priests of Zeus, who were called Selli. Recent excavations which have been made at this spot have brought to light the ruins of the ancient temple of Zeus, and also, among other interesting relics, some plates of lead, on which are engraved inquiries which were evidently made by certain individuals who consulted the oracle. These little leaden plates speak to us, as it were, in a curiously homely manner of a by-gone time in the buried past. One person inquires what god he should apply to for health and fortune; another asks for advice concerning his child; and a third, evidently a shepherd, promises a gift to the oracle should a speculation in sheep turn out successfully. Had these little memorials been of gold instead of lead, they would doubtless have shared the fate of the numerous treasures which adorned this and other temples, in the universal pillage which took place when Greece fell into the hands of barbarians.

Though Dodona was the most ancient of his shrines, the great national seat of the worship of Zeus was at Olympia in Elis, where there was a magnificent temple dedicated to him, containing the famous colossal statue by Phidias above described. Crowds of devout worshippers flocked to this world-renowned fane from all parts of Greece, not only to pay homage to their supreme deity, but also to join in the celebrated games which were held there at intervals of four years. The Olympic games were such a thoroughly national institution, that even Greeks who had left their

native country made a point of returning on these occasions, if possible, in order to contend with their fellow-countrymen in the various athletic sports which took place at these festivals.

It will be seen on reflection that in a country like Greece, which contained so many petty states, often at variance with each other, these national gatherings must have been most valuable as a means of uniting the Greeks in one great bond of brotherhood. On these festive occasions the whole nation met together, forgetting for the moment all past differences, and uniting in the enjoyment of the same festivities.

It will doubtless have been remarked that in the representations of Zeus he is always accompanied by an eagle. This royal bird was sacred to him, probably from the fact of its being the only creature capable of gazing at the sun without being dazzled, which may have suggested the idea that it was able to contemplate the splendour of divine majesty unshrinkingly.

The oak-tree, and also the summits of mountains, were sacred to Zeus. His sacrifices consisted of white bulls, cows, and goats.

## Zeus' Wives

Zeus had seven immortal wives, whose names were Metis, Themis, Eurynome, Demeter, Mnemosyne, Leto, and Hera.

**Metis**, his first wife, was one of the Oceanides or sea-nymphs. She was the personification of prudence and wisdom, a convincing proof of which she displayed in her successful administration of the potion which caused Cronus to yield up his children. She was endowed with the gift of prophecy, and foretold to Zeus that one of their children would gain ascendency over him. In order, therefore, to avert the possibility of the prediction being fulfilled he swallowed her before any children were born to them. Feeling afterwards violent pains in his head, he sent for Hephaestus, and ordered him to open it with an axe. His command was obeyed, and out sprang, with a loud and martial shout, a beautiful being, clad in armour from head to foot. This was Athene, goddess of Armed Resistance and Wisdom.

**Themis** was the goddess of Justice, Law, and Order.

**Eurynome** was one of the Oceanides, and the mother of the Charites or Graces.

**Demeter**, the daughter of Cronus and Rhea, was the goddess of Agriculture.

**Mnemosyne**, the daughter of Uranus and Gaea, was the goddess of Memory and the mother of the nine Muses.

**Leto** was the daughter of Coeus and Phoebe. She was gifted with wonderful beauty, and was tenderly loved by Zeus, but her lot was far from being a happy one, for Hera, being extremely jealous of her, persecuted her with inveterate cruelty, and sent the dreadful serpent Python to terrify and torment her wherever she went. But Zeus, who had observed with the deepest compassion her weary wanderings and agonized fears, resolved to create for her some place of refuge, however humble, where she might feel herself safe from the venomous attacks of the serpent. He therefore brought her to Delos, a floating island in the Aegean Sea, which he made stationary by attaching it with chains of adamant to the bottom of the sea. Here she gave birth to her twin-children, Apollo and Artemis, two of the most beautiful of the immortals.

According to some versions of the story of Leto, Zeus transformed her into a quail, in order that she might thus elude the vigilance of Hera, and she is said to have resumed her true form when she arrived at the island of Delos.

**Hera**, being the principal wife of Zeus and queen of heaven, has a detailed account on the opposite page.

In the union of Zeus with most of his immortal wives we shall find that an allegorical meaning is conveyed. His marriage with Metis, who is said to have surpassed both gods and men in knowledge, represents supreme power allied to wisdom and prudence. His union with Themis typifies the bond which exists between divine majesty and justice, law, and order. Eurynome, as the mother of the Charites or Graces, supplied the refining and harmonizing influences of grace and beauty, whilst the marriage of Zeus with Mnemosyne typifies the union of genius with memory.

# Hera

**HERA, THE ELDEST DAUGHTER** of Cronus and Rhea, was born at Samos, or, according to some accounts, at Argos, and was reared by the sea-divinities Oceanus and Tethys, who were models of conjugal fidelity. She was the principal wife of Zeus, and, as queen of heaven, participated in the honours paid to him, but her dominion only extended over the air (the lower aerial regions). Hera appears to be the sublime embodiment of strict matronly virtue, and is on that account the protectress of purity and married women. Faultless herself in her fidelity as a wife, she is essentially the type of the sanctity of the marriage tie, and holds in abhorrence any violation of its obligations. So strongly was she imbued with this hatred of any immorality, that, finding herself so often called upon to punish the failings of both gods and men in this respect, she became jealous, harsh, and vindictive. Her exalted position as the wife of the supreme deity, combined with her extreme beauty, caused her to become exceedingly vain, and she consequently resented with great severity any infringement on her rights as queen of heaven, or any apparent slight on her personal appearance.

Hera was the mother of Ares, Hephaestus, Hebe, and Eileithyia. Ares was the god of War; Hephaestus, of Fire; Hebe, of Youth; and Eileithyia presided over the birth of mortals.

Hera dearly loved Greece, and indeed always watched over and protected Greek interests, her beloved and favourite cities being Argos, Samos, Sparta, and Mycenae.

## Worshipping Hera

Her principal temples were at Argos and Samos. From a remote period she was greatly venerated at Olympia, and her temple there, which stood in the Altis or sacred grove, was five hundred years older than that of Zeus on the same spot. Some interesting excavations which are now going on there have brought to light the remains of the ancient edifice, which contains among other treasures of antiquity several beautiful statues, the work of the famous sculptors of ancient Greece. At first this temple was built of

wood, then of stone, and the one lately discovered was formed of conglomerate of shells.

In the Altis races were run by young maidens in honour of Hera, and the fleetest of foot received in token of her victory an olive-wreath and a piece of the flesh of the sacrifices. These races, like the Olympic Games, were celebrated at intervals of four years, and were called Herae. A beautiful robe, woven by sixteen women chosen from the sixteen cities of Elis, was always offered to Hera on these occasions, and choral songs and sacred dances formed part of the ceremonies.

Hera is usually represented seated on a throne, holding a pomegranate in one hand and a sceptre surmounted by a cuckoo in the other. She appears as a calm, dignified matron of majestic beauty, robed in a tunic and mantle, her forehead is broad and intellectual, her eyes large and fully opened, and her arms dazzlingly white and finely moulded.

The finest statue of this divinity was that by Polycletus at Argos.

Her attributes are the diadem, veil, sceptre, and peacock.

The first day of every month a ewe-lamb and sow were sacrificed to Hera. The hawk, goose, and more particularly the peacock were sacred to her. Flocks of these beautiful birds generally surround her throne and draw her chariot, Iris, the Rainbow, being seated behind her.

Her favourite flowers were the dittany, poppy, and lily.

# Hestia

**HESTIA WAS THE DAUGHTER** of Cronus and Rhea. She was the goddess of Fire in its first application to the wants of mankind, hence she was essentially the presiding deity of the domestic hearth and the guardian spirit of man, and it was her pure and benign influence which was supposed to protect the sanctity of domestic life.

Now in these early ages the hearth was regarded as the most important and most sacred portion of the dwelling, probably because the protection of the fire was an important consideration, for if once permitted to become extinct, re-ignition was attended with extreme difficulty. In fact, the hearth was held so sacred that it constituted the sanctum of the family, for which reason it was always erected in the centre of every house. It was a few feet in height and was built of stone; the fire was placed on the top of it, and served the double purpose of preparing the daily meals, and consuming the family sacrifices. Round this domestic hearth or altar were gathered the various members of the family, the head of the house occupying the place of honour nearest the hearth. Here prayers were said and sacrifices offered, and here also every kind and loving feeling was fostered, which even extended to the hunted and guilty stranger, who, if he once succeeded in touching this sacred altar, was safe from pursuit and punishment, and was henceforth placed under the protection of the family. Any crime committed within the sacred precincts of the domestic hearth was invariably visited by death.

In Grecian cities there was a common hall, called the Prytaneum, in which the members of the government had their meals at the expense of the state, and here too was the Hestia, or public hearth, with its fire, by means of which those meals were prepared. It was customary for emigrants to take with them a portion of this sacred fire, which they jealously guarded and brought with them to their new home, where it served as a connecting link between the young Greek colony and the mother country. Hestia is generally represented standing, and in accordance with the dignity and sanctity of her character, always appears

fully draped. Her countenance is distinguished by a serene gravity of expression.

# Poseidon

**POSEIDON WAS THE SON** of Kronos and Rhea, and the brother of Zeus. He was god of the sea, more particularly of the Mediterranean, and, like the element over which he presided, was of a variable disposition, now violently agitated, and now calm and placid, for which reason he is sometimes represented by the poets as quiet and composed, and at others as disturbed and angry.

In the earliest ages of Greek mythology, he merely symbolized the watery element; but in later times, as navigation and intercourse with other nations engendered greater traffic by sea, Poseidon gained in importance, and came to be regarded as a distinct divinity, holding indisputable dominion over the sea, and over all sea-divinities, who acknowledged him as their sovereign ruler. He possessed the power of causing at will, mighty and destructive tempests, in which the billows rise mountains high, the wind becomes a hurricane, land and sea being enveloped in thick mists, whilst destruction assails the unfortunate mariners exposed to their fury. On the other hand, his alone was the power of stilling the angry waves, of soothing the troubled waters, and granting safe voyages to mariners. For this reason, Poseidon was always invoked and propitiated by a libation before a voyage was undertaken, and sacrifices and thanksgivings were gratefully offered to him after a safe and prosperous journey by sea.

The symbol of his power was the fisherman’s fork or trident, by means of which he produced earthquakes, raised up islands from the bottom of the sea, and caused wells to spring forth out of the earth.

## Worshipping Poseidon

Poseidon was essentially the presiding deity over fishermen, and was on that account, more particularly worshipped and revered in countries bordering on the sea-coast, where fish naturally formed a staple commodity of trade. He was supposed to vent his displeasure by sending disastrous inundations, which completely destroyed whole countries, and were usually accompanied by terrible marine monsters, who swallowed up

and devoured those whom the floods had spared. It is probable that these sea-monsters are the poetical figures which represent the demons of hunger and famine, necessarily accompanying a general inundation.

The Greeks believed that it was to Poseidon they were indebted for the existence of the horse, which he is said to have produced in the following manner: Athene and Poseidon both claiming the right to name Cecropia (the ancient name of Athens), a violent dispute arose, which was finally settled by an assembly of the Olympian gods, who decided that whichever of the contending parties presented mankind with the most useful gift, should obtain the privilege of naming the city. Upon this Poseidon struck the ground with his trident, and the horse sprang forth in all his untamed strength and graceful beauty. From the spot which Athene touched with her wand, issued the olive-tree, whereupon the gods unanimously awarded to her the victory, declaring her gift to be the emblem of peace and plenty, whilst that of Poseidon was thought to be the symbol of war and bloodshed. Athene accordingly called the city Athens, after herself, and it has ever since retained this name.

Poseidon tamed the horse for the use of mankind, and was believed to have taught men the art of managing horses by the bridle. The Isthmian games (so named because they were held on the Isthmus of Corinth), in which horse and chariot races were a distinguishing feature, were instituted in honour of Poseidon.

He was more especially worshipped in the Peloponnesus, though universally revered throughout Greece and in the south of Italy. His sacrifices were generally black and white bulls, also wild boars and rams. His usual attributes are the trident, horse, and dolphin.

In some parts of Greece this divinity was identified with the sea-god Nereus, for which reason the Nereides, or daughters of Nereus, are represented as accompanying him.

## His Role Within the Gods

Poseidon is generally represented as resembling his brother Zeus in features, height, and general aspect; but we miss in the countenance of the sea-god the kindness and benignity which so pleasingly distinguish his mighty brother. The eyes are bright and piercing, and the contour of the face somewhat sharper in its outline than that of Zeus, thus corresponding,

as it were, with his more angry and violent nature. His hair waves in dark, disorderly masses over his shoulders; his chest is broad, and his frame powerful and stalwart; he wears a short, curling beard, and a band round his head. He usually appears standing erect in a graceful shell-chariot, drawn by hippocamps, or sea-horses, with golden manes and brazen hoofs, who bound over the dancing waves with such wonderful swiftness, that the chariot scarcely touches the water. The monsters of the deep, acknowledging their mighty lord, gambol playfully around him, whilst the sea joyfully smooths a path for the passage of its all-powerful ruler.

He inhabited a beautiful palace at the bottom of the sea at Aegea in Euboea, and also possessed a royal residence on Mount Olympus, which, however, he only visited when his presence was required at the council of the gods.

His wonderful palace beneath the waters was of vast extent; in its lofty and capacious halls thousands of his followers could assemble. The exterior of the building was of bright gold, which the continual wash of the waters preserved untarnished; in the interior, lofty and graceful columns supported the gleaming dome. Everywhere fountains of glistening, silvery water played; everywhere groves and arbours of feathery-leaved sea-plants appeared, whilst rocks of pure crystal glistened with all the varied colours of the rainbow. Some of the paths were strewn with white sparkling sand, interspersed with jewels, pearls, and amber. This delightful abode was surrounded on all sides by wide fields, where there were whole groves of dark purple coralline, and tufts of beautiful scarlet-leaved plants, and sea-anemones of every tint. Here grew bright, pinky sea-weeds, mosses of all hues and shades, and tall grasses, which, growing upwards, formed emerald caves and grottoes such as the Nereides love, whilst fish of various kinds playfully darted in and out, in the full enjoyment of their native element. Nor was illumination wanting in this fairy-like region, which at night was lit up by the glow-worms of the deep.

But although Poseidon ruled with absolute power over the ocean and its inhabitants, he nevertheless bowed submissively to the will of the great ruler of Olympus, and appeared at all times desirous of conciliating him. We find him coming to his aid when emergency demanded, and frequently rendering him valuable assistance against his opponents. At the time when Zeus was harassed by the attacks of the Giants, he proved himself a most

powerful ally, engaging in single combat with a hideous giant named Polybotes, whom he followed over the sea, and at last succeeded in destroying, by hurling upon him the island of Cos.

These amicable relations between the brothers were, however, sometimes interrupted. Thus, for instance, upon one occasion Poseidon joined Hera and Athene in a secret conspiracy to seize upon the ruler of heaven, place him in fetters, and deprive him of the sovereign power. The conspiracy being discovered, Hera, as the chief instigator of this sacrilegious attempt on the divine person of Zeus, was severely chastised, and even beaten, by her enraged spouse, as a punishment for her rebellion and treachery, whilst Poseidon was condemned, for the space of a whole year, to forego his dominion over the sea, and it was at this time that, in conjunction with Apollo, he built for Laomedon the walls of Troy.

## The Loves and Children of Poseidon

Poseidon married a sea-nymph named Amphitrite, whom he wooed under the form of a dolphin. She afterwards became jealous of a beautiful maiden called Scylla, who was beloved by Poseidon, and in order to revenge herself she threw some herbs into a well where Scylla was bathing, which had the effect of metamorphosing her into a monster of terrible aspect, having twelve feet, six heads with six long necks, and a voice which resembled the bark of a dog. This awful monster is said to have inhabited a cave at a very great height in the famous rock which still bears her name, and was supposed to swoop down from her rocky eminence upon every ship that passed, and with each of her six heads to secure a victim.

Amphitrite is often represented assisting Poseidon in attaching the sea-horses to his chariot.

The Cyclopes were the sons of Poseidon and Amphitrite. They were a wild race of gigantic growth, similar in their nature to the earth-born Giants, and had only one eye each in the middle of their foreheads. They led a lawless life, possessing neither social manners nor fear of the gods, and were the workmen of Hephaestus, whose workshop was supposed to be in the heart of the volcanic mountain Etna.

Here we have another striking instance of the manner in which the Greeks personified the powers of nature, which they saw in active

operation around them. They beheld with awe, mingled with astonishment, the fire, stones, and ashes which poured forth from the summit of this and other volcanic mountains, and, with their vivacity of imagination, found a solution of the mystery in the supposition, that the god of Fire must be busy at work with his men in the depths of the earth, and that the mighty flames which they beheld, issued in this manner from his subterranean forge.

The chief representative of the Cyclops was the man-eating monster Polyphemus, described by Homer as having been blinded and outwitted at last by Odysseus. This monster fell in love with a beautiful nymph called Galatea; but, as may be supposed, his addresses were not acceptable to the fair maiden, who rejected them in favour of a youth named Acis, upon which Polyphemus, with his usual barbarity, destroyed the life of his rival by throwing upon him a gigantic rock. The blood of the murdered Acis, gushing out of the rock, formed a stream which still bears his name.

Triton, Rhoda, and Benthesicyme were also children of Poseidon and Amphitrite.

The sea-god was the father of two giant sons called Otus and Ephialtes. When only nine years old they were said to be 27 cubits in height and nine in breadth. These youthful giants were as rebellious as they were powerful, even presuming to threaten the gods themselves with hostilities. During the war of the Gigantomachia, they endeavoured to scale heaven by piling mighty mountains one upon another. Already had they succeeded in placing Mount Ossa on Olympus and Pelion on Ossa, when this impious project was frustrated by Apollo, who destroyed them with his arrows. It was supposed that had not their lives been thus cut off before reaching maturity, their sacrilegious designs would have been carried into effect.

Pelias and Neleus were also sons of Poseidon. Their mother Tyro was attached to the river-god Enipeus, whose form Poseidon assumed, and thus won her love. Pelias became afterwards famous in the story of the Argonauts, and Neleus was the father of Nestor, who was distinguished in the Trojan War.

# Demeter

**DEMETER** (from *Ge-meter*, earth-mother) was the daughter of Cronus and Rhea. She represented that portion of Gaea (the whole solid earth) which we call the earth's crust, and which produces all vegetation. As goddess of agriculture, field-fruits, plenty, and productiveness, she was the sustainer of material life, and was therefore a divinity of great importance. When ancient Gaea lost, with Uranus, her position as a ruling divinity, she abdicated her sway in favour of her daughter Rhea, who henceforth inherited the powers which her mother had previously possessed, receiving in her place the honour and worship of mankind. In a very old poem Gaea is accordingly described as retiring to a cavern in the bowels of the earth, where she sits in the lap of her daughter, slumbering, moaning, and nodding for ever and ever.

It is necessary to keep clearly in view the distinctive difference between the three great earth-goddesses Gaea, Rhea, and Demeter. Gaea represents the earth as a whole, with its mighty subterranean forces; Rhea is that productive power which causes vegetation to spring forth, thus sustaining men and animals; Demeter, by presiding over agriculture, directs and utilizes Rhea's productive powers. But in later times, when Rhea, like other ancient divinities, loses her importance as a ruling deity, Demeter assumes all her functions and attributes, and then becomes the goddess of the life-producing and life-maintaining earth-crust. We must bear in mind the fact that man in his primitive state knew neither how to sow nor how to till the ground; when, therefore, he had exhausted the pastures which surrounded him he was compelled to seek others which were as yet unreaped; thus, roaming constantly from one place to another, settled habitations, and consequently civilizing influences, were impossible. Demeter, however, by introducing a knowledge of agriculture, put an end, at once and for ever, to that nomadic life which was now no longer necessary.

The favour of Demeter was believed to bring mankind rich harvests and fruitful crops, whereas her displeasure caused blight, drought, and famine.

The island of Sicily was supposed to be under her especial protection, and there she was regarded with particular veneration, the Sicilians naturally attributing the wonderful fertility of their country to the partiality of the goddess.

Demeter is usually represented as a woman of noble bearing and majestic appearance, tall, matronly, and dignified, with beautiful golden hair, which falls in rippling curls over her stately shoulders, the yellow locks being emblematical of the ripened ears of corn. Sometimes she appears seated in a chariot drawn by winged dragons, at others she stands erect, her figure drawn up to its full height, and always fully draped; she bears a sheaf of wheat-ears in one hand and a lighted torch in the other. The wheat-ears are not unfrequently replaced by a bunch of poppies, with which her brows are also garlanded, though sometimes she merely wears a simple riband in her hair.

Demeter, as the wife of Zeus, became the mother of Persephone, to whom she was so tenderly attached that her whole life was bound up in her, and she knew no happiness except in her society.

Demeter exercised great severity towards those who incurred her displeasure. We find examples of this in the stories of Stellio and Eresicthon. Stellio was a youth who ridiculed the goddess for the eagerness with which she was eating a bowl of porridge, when weary and faint in the vain search for her daughter. Resolved that he should never again have an opportunity of thus offending, she angrily threw into his face the remainder of the food, and changed him into a spotted lizard.

Eresicthon, son of Triopas, had drawn upon himself the anger of Demeter by cutting down her sacred groves, for which she punished him with a constant and insatiable hunger. He sold all his possessions in order to satisfy his cravings, and was forced at last to devour his own limbs. His daughter Metra, who was devotedly attached to him, possessed the power of transforming herself into a variety of different animals. By this means she contrived to support her father, who sold her again and again each time she assumed a different form, and thus he dragged on a pitiful existence.

# Artemis

**ARTEMIS WAS WORSHIPPED** by the Greeks under various appellations, to each of which belonged special characteristics. Thus she is known as the Arcadian, Ephesian and Brauronian Artemis, and also as Selene-Artemis, and in order fully to comprehend the worship of this divinity, we must consider her under each aspect.

## Arcadian Artemis

The Arcadian Artemis (the real Artemis of the Greeks) was the daughter of Zeus and Leto, and twin-sister of Apollo. She was the goddess of Hunting and Chastity, and having obtained from her father permission to lead a life of celibacy, she ever remained a maiden-divinity. Artemis is the feminine counterpart of her brother, the glorious god of Light, and, like him, though she deals out destruction and sudden death to men and animals, she is also able to alleviate suffering and cure diseases. Like Apollo also, she is skilled in the use of the bow, but in a far more eminent degree, for in the character of Artemis, who devoted herself to the chase with passionate ardour, this becomes an all-distinguishing feature. Armed with her bow and quiver, and attended by her train of huntresses, who were nymphs of the woods and springs, she roamed over the mountains in pursuit of her favourite exercise, destroying in her course the wild animals of the forest. When the chase was ended, Artemis and her maidens loved to assemble in a shady grove, or on the banks of a favourite stream, where they joined in the merry song, or graceful dance, and made the hills resound with their joyous shouts.

As the type of purity and chastity, Artemis was especially venerated by young maidens, who, before marrying, sacrificed their hair to her. She was also the patroness of those vowed to celibacy, and punished severely any infringement of their obligation.

The huntress-goddess is represented as being a head taller than her attendant nymphs, and always appears as a youthful and slender maiden. Her features are beautiful, but wanting in gentleness of expression; her hair is gathered negligently into a knot at the back of her well-shaped

head; and her figure, though somewhat masculine, is most graceful in its attitude and proportions. The short robe she wears, leaves her limbs free for the exercise of the chase, her devotion to which is indicated by the quiver which is slung over her shoulder, and the bow which she bears in her hand.

There are many famous statues of this divinity; but the most celebrated is that known as the Diana of Versailles, now in the Louvre, which forms a not unworthy companion to the Apollo-Belvedere of the Vatican. In this statue, the goddess appears in the act of rescuing a hunted deer from its pursuers, on whom she is turning with angry mien. One hand is laid protectingly on the head of the stag, whilst with the other she draws an arrow from the quiver which hangs over her shoulder.

Her attributes are the bow, quiver, and spear. The animals sacred to her are the hind, dog, bear, and wild boar.

## Ephesian Artemis

The Ephesian Artemis, known to us as ‘Diana of the Ephesians,’ was a very ancient Asiatic divinity of Persian origin called Metra, whose worship the Greek colonists found already established, when they first settled in Asia Minor, and whom they identified with their own Greek Artemis, though she really possessed but one single attribute in common with their home deity.

Metra was a twofold divinity, and represented, in one phase of her character, all-pervading love; in the other she was the light of heaven; and as Artemis, in her character as Selene, was the only Greek female divinity who represented celestial light, the Greek settlers, according to their custom of fusing foreign deities into their own, seized at once upon this point of resemblance, and decided that Metra should henceforth be regarded as identical with Artemis.

In her character as the love which pervades all nature, and penetrates everywhere, they believed her also to be present in the mysterious Realm of Shades, where she exercised her benign sway, replacing to a certain extent that ancient divinity Hecate, and partly usurping also the place of Persephone, as mistress of the lower world. Thus they believed that it was she who permitted the spirits of the departed to revisit the earth, in order to communicate with those they loved, and to give them timely warning of

coming evil. In fact, this great, mighty, and omnipresent power of love, as embodied in the Ephesian Artemis, was believed by the great thinkers of old, to be the ruling spirit of the universe, and it was to her influence, that all the mysterious and beneficent workings of nature were ascribed.

There was a magnificent temple erected to this divinity at Ephesus (a city of Asia Minor), which was ranked among the seven wonders of the world, and was unequalled in beauty and grandeur. The interior of this edifice was adorned with statues and paintings, and contained one hundred and twenty-seven columns, sixty feet in height, each column having been placed there by a different king. The wealth deposited in this temple was enormous, and the goddess was here worshipped with particular awe and solemnity. In the interior of the edifice stood a statue of her, formed of ebony, with lions on her arms and turrets on her head, whilst a number of breasts indicated the fruitfulness of the earth and of nature. Ctesiphon was the principal architect of this world-renowned structure, which, however, was not entirely completed till two hundred and twenty years after the foundation-stone was laid. But the labour of centuries was destroyed in a single night; for a man called Herostratus, seized with the insane desire of making his name famous to all succeeding generations, set fire to it and completely destroyed it. So great was the indignation and sorrow of the Ephesians at this calamity, that they enacted a law, forbidding the incendiary's name to be mentioned, thereby however, defeating their own object, for thus the name of Herostratus has been handed down to posterity, and will live as long as the memory of the famous temple of Ephesus.

## Brauronian Artemis

In ancient times, the area which we now call the Crimea, was known by the name of the Taurica Chersonnesus. It was colonized by Greek settlers, who, finding that the Scythian inhabitants had a native divinity somewhat resembling their own Artemis, identified her with the huntress-goddess of the mother-country. The worship of this Taurian Artemis was attended with the most barbarous practices, for, in accordance with a law which she had enacted, all strangers, whether male or female, landing, or shipwrecked on her shores, were sacrificed upon her altars. It is supposed that this decree was issued by the Taurian goddess of Chastity, to protect the purity of her followers, by keeping them apart from foreign influences.

The interesting story of Iphigenia, a priestess in the temple of Artemis at Tauris, forms the subject of one of Schiller's most beautiful plays. The circumstances occurred at the commencement of the Trojan war, and are as follows: – The fleet, collected by the Greeks for the siege of Troy, had assembled at Aulis, in Boeotia, and was about to set sail, when Agamemnon, the commander-in-chief, had the misfortune to kill accidentally a stag which was grazing in a grove, sacred to Artemis. The offended goddess sent continuous calms that delayed the departure of the fleet, and Calchas, the soothsayer, who had accompanied the expedition, declared that nothing less than the sacrifice of Agamemnon's favourite daughter, Iphigenia, would appease the wrath of the goddess. At these words, the heroic heart of the brave leader sank within him, and he declared that rather than consent to so fearful an alternative, he would give up his share in the expedition and return to Argos. In this dilemma Odysseus and other great generals called a council to discuss the matter, and, after much deliberation, it was decided that private feeling must yield to the welfare of the state. For a long time the unhappy Agamemnon turned a deaf ear to their arguments, but at last they succeeded in persuading him that it was his duty to make the sacrifice. He, accordingly, despatched a messenger to his wife, Clytemnaestra, begging her to send Iphigenia to him, alleging as a pretext that the great hero Achilles desired to make her his wife. Rejoicing at the brilliant destiny which awaited her beautiful daughter, the fond mother at once obeyed the command, and sent her to Aulis. When the maiden arrived at her destination, and discovered, to her horror, the dreadful fate which awaited her, she threw herself in an agony of grief at her father's feet, and with sobs and tears entreated him to have mercy on her, and to spare her young life. But alas! Her doom was sealed, and her now repentant and heart-broken father was powerless to avert it. The unfortunate victim was bound to the altar, and already the fatal knife was raised to deal the death-blow, when suddenly Iphigenia disappeared from view, and in her place on the altar, lay a beautiful deer ready to be sacrificed. It was Artemis herself, who, pitying the youth and beauty of her victim, caused her to be conveyed in a cloud to Taurica, where she became one of her priestesses, and entrusted with the charge of her temple; a dignity, however, which necessitated the offering of those human sacrifices presented to Artemis.

Many years passed away, during which time the long and wearisome siege of Troy had come to an end, and the brave Agamemnon had returned home to meet death at the hands of his wife and Aegisthus. But his daughter, Iphigenia, was still an exile from her native country, and continued to perform the terrible duties which her office involved. She had long given up all hopes of ever being restored to her friends, when one day two Greek strangers landed on Taurica's inhospitable shores. These were Orestes and Pylades, whose romantic attachment to each other has made their names synonymous for devoted self-sacrificing friendship. Orestes was Iphigenia's brother, and Pylades her cousin, and their object in undertaking an expedition fraught with so much peril, was to obtain the statue of the Taurian Artemis. Orestes, having incurred the anger of the Furies for avenging the murder of his father Agamemnon, was pursued by them wherever he went, until at last he was informed by the oracle of Delphi that, in order to pacify them, he must convey the image of the Taurian Artemis from Tauris to Attica. This he at once resolved to do, and accompanied by his faithful friend Pylades, who insisted on sharing the dangers of the undertaking, he set out for Taurica. But the unfortunate youths had hardly stepped on shore before they were seized by the natives, who, as usual, conveyed them for sacrifice to the temple of Artemis. Iphigenia, discovering that they were Greeks, though unaware of their near relationship to herself, thought the opportunity a favourable one for sending tidings of her existence to her native country, and, accordingly, requested one of the strangers to be the bearer of a letter from her to her family. A magnanimous dispute now arose between the friends, and each besought the other to accept the precious privilege of life and freedom. Pylades, at length overcome by the urgent entreaties of Orestes, agreed to be the bearer of the missive, but on looking more closely at the superscription, he observed, to his intense surprise, that it was addressed to Orestes. Hereupon an explanation followed; the brother and sister recognized each other, amid joyful tears and loving embraces, and assisted by her friends and kinsmen, Iphigenia escaped with them from a country where she had spent so many unhappy days, and witnessed so many scenes of horror and anguish.

The fugitives, having contrived to obtain the image of the Taurian Artemis, carried it with them to Brauron in Attica. This divinity was

henceforth known as the Brauronian Artemis, and the rites which had rendered her worship so infamous in Taurica were now introduced into Greece, and human victims bled freely under the sacrificial knife, both in Athens and Sparta. The revolting practice of offering human sacrifices to her, was continued until the time of Lycurgus, the great Spartan lawgiver, who put an end to it by substituting in its place one, which was hardly less barbarous, namely, the scourging of youths, who were whipped on the altars of the Brauronian Artemis in the most cruel manner; sometimes indeed they expired under the lash, in which case their mothers, far from lamenting their fate, are said to have rejoiced, considering this an honourable death for their sons.

## Selene-Artemis

Hitherto we have seen Artemis only in the various phases of her terrestrial character; but just as her brother Apollo drew into himself by degrees the attributes of that more ancient divinity Helios, the sun-god, so, in like manner, she came to be identified in later times with Selene, the moon-goddess, in which character she is always represented as wearing on her forehead a glittering crescent, whilst a flowing veil, bespangled with stars, reaches to her feet, and a long robe completely envelops her.

# Phoebus-Apollo

**PHOEBUS-APOLLO**, the god of Light, Prophecy, Music, Poetry, and the Arts and Sciences, is by far the noblest conception within the whole range of Greek mythology, and his worship, which not only extended to all the states of Greece, but also to Asia Minor and to every Greek colony throughout the world, stands out among the most ancient and strongly-marked features of Grecian history, and exerted a more decided influence over the Greek nation, than that of any other deity, not excepting Zeus himself.

Apollo was the son of Zeus and Leto, and was born beneath the shade of a palm tree which grew at the foot of Mount Cynthus, on the barren and rocky island of Delos. The poets tell us that the earth smiled when the young god first beheld the light of day, and that Delos became so proud and exultant at the honour thus conferred upon her, that she covered herself with golden flowers; swans surrounded the island, and the Delian nymphs celebrated his birth with songs of joy.

The unhappy Leto, driven to Delos by the relentless persecutions of Hera, was not long permitted to enjoy her haven of refuge. Being still tormented by her enemy, the young mother was once more obliged to fly; she therefore resigned the charge of her new-born babe to the goddess Themis, who carefully wrapped the helpless infant in swaddling-clothes, and fed him with nectar and ambrosia; but he had no sooner partaken of the heavenly food than, to the amazement of the goddess, he burst asunder the bands which confined his infant limbs, and springing to his feet, appeared before her as a full-grown youth of divine strength and beauty. He now demanded a lyre and a bow, declaring that henceforth he would announce to mankind the will of his father Zeus. “The golden lyre,” said he, “shall be my friend, the bent bow my delight, and in oracles will I foretell the dark future.” With these words he ascended to Olympus, where he was received with joyful acclamations into the assembly of the celestial gods, who acknowledged him as the most beautiful and glorious of all the sons of Zeus.

Apollo is represented by the poets as being eternally young; his countenance, glowing with joyous life, is the embodiment of immortal beauty; his eyes are of a deep blue; his forehead low, but broad and intellectual; his hair, which falls over his shoulders in long waving locks, is of a golden, or warm chestnut hue. He is crowned with laurel, and wears a purple robe; in his hand he bears his silver bow, which is unbent when he smiles, but ready for use when he menaces evil-doers.

But Apollo, the eternally beautiful youth, the perfection of all that is graceful and refined, rarely seems to have been happy in his love; either his advances met with a repulse, or his union with the object of his affection was attended with fatal consequences.

## God of Light

Phoebus-Apollo was the god of light in a twofold signification: first, as representing the great orb of day which illumines the world; and secondly, as the heavenly light which animates the soul of man. He inherited his function as sun-god from Helios, with whom, in later times, he was so completely identified, that the personality of the one became gradually merged in that of the other. We, accordingly, find Helios frequently confounded with Apollo, myths belonging to the former attributed to the latter; and with some tribes – the Ionic, for instance – so complete is this identification, that Apollo is called by them Helios-Apollo.

As the divinity whose power is developed in the broad light of day, he brings joy and delight to nature, and health and prosperity to man. By the influence of his warm and gentle rays he disperses the noxious vapours of the night, assists the grain to ripen and the flowers to bloom.

But although, as god of the sun, he is a life-giving and life-preserving power, who, by his genial influence, dispels the cold of winter, he is, at the same time, the god who, by means of his fiercely darting rays, could spread disease and send sudden death to men and animals; and it is to this phase of his character that we must look for the explanation of his being considered, in conjunction with his twin-sister, Artemis (as moon-goddess), a divinity of death. The brother and sister share this function between them, he taking man and she woman as her aim, and those especially who died in the bloom of youth, or at an advanced age, were believed to have been killed by their gentle arrows. But Apollo did not

always send an easy death. We see in the *Iliad* how, when angry with the Greeks, the ‘god of the silver bow’ strode down from Olympus, with his quiver full of death-bringing darts, and sent a raging pestilence into their camp. For nine days he let fly his fatal arrows, first on animals and then on men, till the air became darkened with the smoke from the funeral pyres.

In his character as god of light, Phoebus-Apollo is the protecting deity of shepherds, because it is he who warms the fields and meadows, and gives rich pastures to the flocks, thereby gladdening the heart of the herdsman.

As the temperate heat of the sun exercises so invigorating an effect on man and animals, and promotes the growth of those medicinal herbs and vegetable productions necessary for the cure of diseases, Phoebus-Apollo was supposed to possess the power of restoring life and health; hence he was regarded as the god of healing; but this feature in his character we shall find more particularly developed in his son Asclepius (Aesculapius), the veritable god of the healing art.

Pursuing our analysis of the various phases in the character of Phoebus-Apollo, we find that with the first beams of his genial light, all nature awakens to renewed life, and the woods re-echo with the jubilant sound of the untaught lays, warbled by thousands of feathered choristers. Hence, by a natural inference, he is the god of music, and as, according to the belief of the ancients, the inspirations of genius were inseparably connected with the glorious light of heaven, he is also the god of poetry, and acts as the special patron of the arts and sciences. Apollo is himself the heavenly musician among the Olympic gods, whose banquets are gladdened by the wondrous strains which he produces from his favourite instrument, the seven-stringed lyre. In the cultus of Apollo, music formed a distinguishing feature. All sacred dances, and even the sacrifices in his honour, were performed to the sound of musical instruments; and it is, in a great measure, owing to the influence which the music in his worship exercised on the Greek nation, that Apollo came to be regarded as the leader of the nine Muses, the legitimate divinities of poetry and song. In this character he is called Musagetes, and is always represented robed in a long flowing garment; his lyre, to the tones of which he appears to be singing, is suspended by a band across the chest; his head is encircled by a wreath of laurel, and his long hair, streaming down over his shoulders, gives him a somewhat effeminate appearance.

## God of Prophecy

And now we must view the glorious god of light under another, and (as far as regards his influence over the Greek nation) a much more important aspect; for, in historical times, all the other functions and attributes of Apollo sink into comparative insignificance before the great power which he exercised as god of prophecy. It is true that all Greek gods were endowed, to a certain extent, with the faculty of foretelling future events; but Apollo, as sun-god, was the concentration of all prophetic power, as it was supposed that nothing escaped his all-seeing eye, which penetrated the most hidden recesses, and laid bare the secrets which lay concealed behind the dark veil of the future.

We have seen that when Apollo assumed his god-like form, he took his place among the immortals; but he had not long enjoyed the rapturous delights of Olympus, before he felt within him an ardent desire to fulfil his great mission of interpreting to mankind the will of his mighty father. He accordingly descended to earth, and travelled through many countries, seeking a fitting site upon which to establish an oracle. At length he reached the southern side of the rocky heights of Parnassus, beneath which lay the harbour of Crissa. Here, under the overhanging cliff, he found a secluded spot, where, from the most ancient times, there had existed an oracle, in which Gaea herself had revealed the future to man, and which, in Deucalion’s time, she had resigned to Themis. It was guarded by the huge serpent Python, the scourge of the surrounding neighbourhood, and the terror alike of men and cattle. The young god, full of confidence in his unerring aim, attacked and slew the monster with his arrows, thus freeing land and people from their mighty enemy.

The grateful inhabitants, anxious to do honour to their deliverer, flocked round Apollo, who proceeded to mark out a plan for a temple, and, with the assistance of numbers of eager volunteers, a suitable edifice was soon erected. It now became necessary to choose ministers, who would offer up sacrifices, interpret his prophecies to the people, and take charge of the temple. Looking round, he saw in the far distance a vessel bound from Crete to the Peloponnesus, and determined to avail himself of her crew for his service. Assuming the shape of an enormous dolphin, he agitated the waters to such a degree, that the ship was tossed violently to and fro, to the

great alarm of the mariners; at the same time he raised a mighty wind, which drove the ship into the harbour of Crissa, where she ran aground. The terrified sailors dared not set foot on shore; but Apollo, under the form of a vigorous youth, stepped down to the vessel, revealed himself in his true character, and informed them that it was he who had driven them to Crissa, in order that they might become his priests, and serve him in his temple. Arrived at the sacred fane, he instructed them how to perform the services in his honour, and desired them to worship him under the name of Apollo-Delphinios, because he had first appeared to them under the form of a dolphin. Thus was established the far-famed oracle of Delphi, the only institution of the kind which was not exclusively national, for it was consulted by Lydians, Phrygians, Etruscans, Romans, etc., and, in fact, was held in the highest repute all over the world. In obedience to its decrees, the laws of Lycurgus were introduced, and the earliest Greek colonies founded. No cities were built without first consulting the Delphic oracle, for it was believed that Apollo took special delight in the founding of cities, the first stone of which he laid in person; nor was any enterprise ever undertaken, without inquiring at this sacred fane as to its probable success.

## God of Atonement

But that which brought Apollo more closely home to the hearts of the people, and raised the whole moral tone of the Greek nation, was the belief, gradually developed with the intelligence of the people, that he was the god who accepted repentance as an atonement for sin, who pardoned the contrite sinner, and who acted as the special protector of those, who, like Orestes, had committed a crime, which required long years of expiation.

## Worshipping Apollo

The chief seat of the worship of Apollo was at Delphi, and here was the most magnificent of all his temples, the foundation of which reaches far beyond all historical knowledge, and which contained immense riches, the offerings of kings and private persons, who had received favourable replies from the oracle. The Greeks believed Delphi to be the central point of the earth, because two eagles sent forth by Zeus, one from the east, the

other from the west, were said to have arrived there at the same moment.

The Pythian games, celebrated in honour of the victory of Apollo over the Python, took place at Delphi every four years. At the first celebration of these games, gods, goddesses, and heroes contended for the prizes, which were at first of gold or silver, but consisted, in later times, of simple laurel wreaths.

On account of its being the place of his birth, the whole island of Delos was consecrated to Apollo, where he was worshipped with great solemnity; the greatest care was taken to preserve the sanctity of the spot, for which reason no one was suffered to be buried there. At the foot of Mount Cynthus was a splendid temple of Apollo which possessed an oracle, and was enriched with magnificent offerings from all parts of Greece. Even foreign nations held this island sacred, for when the Persians passed it on their way to attack Greece, they not only sailed by, leaving it uninjured, but sent rich presents to the temple. Games, called Delia, instituted by Theseus, were celebrated at Delos every four years.

A festival termed the Gymnopedaea was held at Sparta in honour of Apollo, in which boys sang the praises of the gods, and of the three hundred Lacedaemonians who fell at the battle of Thermopylae.

Wolves and hawks were sacrificed to Apollo, and the birds sacred to him were the hawk, raven, and swan.

# Pallas-Athene

**PALLAS-ATHENE**, goddess of Wisdom and Armed Resistance, was a purely Greek divinity; that is to say, no other nation possessed a corresponding conception. She was supposed, as already related, to have issued from the head of Zeus himself, clad in armour from head to foot. The miraculous advent of this maiden goddess is beautifully described by Homer in one of his hymns: snow-capped Olympus shook to its foundation; the glad earth re-echoed her martial shout; the billowy sea became agitated; and Helios, the sun-god, arrested his fiery steeds in their headlong course to welcome this wonderful emanation from the godhead. Athene was at once admitted into the assembly of the gods, and henceforth took her place as the most faithful and sagacious of all her father's counsellors. This brave, dauntless maiden, so exactly the essence of all that is noble in the character of 'the father of gods and men,' remained throughout chaste in word and deed, and kind at heart, without exhibiting any of those failings which somewhat mar the nobler features in the character of Zeus.

## The Roles of Pallas-Athene

This direct emanation from Zeus' own self, justly his favourite child, his better and purer counterpart, received from him several important prerogatives. She was permitted to hurl the thunderbolts, to prolong the life of man, and to bestow the gift of prophecy; in fact Athene was the only divinity whose authority was equal to that of Zeus himself, and when he had ceased to visit the earth in person she was empowered by him to act as his deputy. It was her especial duty to protect the state and all peaceful associations of mankind, which she possessed the power of defending when occasion required. She encouraged the maintenance of law and order, and defended the right on all occasions, for which reason, in the Trojan war she espouses the cause of the Greeks and exerts all her influence on their behalf. The Areopagus, a court of justice where religious causes and murders were tried, was believed to have been instituted by her, and when both sides happened to have an equal number of votes she gave the

casting-vote in favour of the accused. She was the patroness of learning, science, and art, more particularly where these contributed directly towards the welfare of nations. She presided over all inventions connected with agriculture, invented the plough, and taught mankind how to use oxen for farming purposes. She also instructed mankind in the use of numbers, trumpets, chariots, etc., and presided over the building of the *Argo*, thereby encouraging the useful art of navigation. She also taught the Greeks how to build the wooden horse by means of which the destruction of Troy was effected.

The safety of cities depended on her care, for which reason her temples were generally built on the citadels, and she was supposed to watch over the defence of the walls, fortifications, harbours, etc. A divinity who so faithfully guarded the best interests of the state, by not only protecting it from the attacks of enemies, but also by developing its chief resources of wealth and prosperity, was worthily chosen as the presiding deity of the state, and in this character as an essentially political goddess she was called Athene-Polias.

The fact of Athene having been born clad in armour, which merely signified that her virtue and purity were unassailable, has given rise to the erroneous supposition that she was the presiding goddess of war; but a deeper study of her character in all its bearings proves that, in contradistinction to her brother Ares, the god of war, who loved strife for its own sake, she only takes up arms to protect the innocent and deserving against tyrannical oppression. It is true that in the *Iliad* we frequently see her on the battlefield fighting valiantly, and protecting her favourite heroes; but this is always at the command of Zeus, who even supplies her with arms for the purpose, as it is supposed that she possessed none of her own. A marked feature in the representations of this deity is the aegis, that wonderful shield given to her by her father as a further means of defence, which, when in danger, she swung so swiftly round and round that it kept at a distance all antagonistic influences; hence her name Pallas, from *pallo*, I swing. In the centre of this shield, which was covered with dragon’s scales, bordered with serpents, and which she sometimes wore as a breastplate, was the awe-inspiring head of the Medusa, which had the effect of turning to stone all beholders.

In addition to the many functions which she exercised in connection with the state, Athene presided over the two chief departments of feminine industry, spinning and weaving. In the latter art she herself displayed unrivalled ability and exquisite taste. She wove her own robe and that of Hera, which last she is said to have embroidered very richly; she also gave Jason a cloak wrought by herself, when he set forth in quest of the Golden Fleece. Being on one occasion challenged to a contest in this accomplishment by a mortal maiden named Arachne, whom she had instructed in the art of weaving, she accepted the challenge and was completely vanquished by her pupil. Angry at her defeat, she struck the unfortunate maiden on the forehead with the shuttle which she held in her hand; and Arachne, being of a sensitive nature, was so hurt by this indignity that she hung herself in despair, and was changed by Athene into a spider. This goddess is said to have invented the flute, upon which she played with considerable talent, until one day, being laughed at by the assembled gods and goddesses for the contortions which her countenance assumed during these musical efforts, she hastily ran to a fountain in order to convince herself whether she deserved their ridicule. Finding to her intense disgust that such was indeed the fact, she threw the flute away, and never raised it to her lips again.

## Worshipping Pallas-Athene

Athene is usually represented fully draped; she has a serious and thoughtful aspect, as though replete with earnestness and wisdom; the beautiful oval contour of her countenance is adorned by the luxuriance of her wealth of hair, which is drawn back from the temples and hangs down in careless grace; she looks the embodiment of strength, grandeur, and majesty; whilst her broad shoulders and small hips give her a slightly masculine appearance.

When represented as the war-goddess she appears clad in armour, with a helmet on her head, from which waves a large plume; she carries the aegis on her arm, and in her hand a golden staff, which possessed the property of endowing her chosen favourites with youth and dignity.

Athene was universally worshipped throughout Greece, but was regarded with special veneration by the Athenians, she being the guardian deity of Athens. Her most celebrated temple was the Parthenon, which stood on the

Acropolis at Athens, and contained her world-renowned statue by Phidias, which ranks second only to that of Zeus by the same great artist. This colossal statue was 39 feet high, and was composed of ivory and gold; its majestic beauty formed the chief attraction of the temple. It represented her standing erect, bearing her spear and shield; in her hand she held an image of Nike, and at her feet there lay a serpent.

The tree sacred to her was the olive, which she herself produced in a contest with Poseidon. The olive-tree thus called into existence was preserved in the temple of Erectheus, on the Acropolis, and is said to have possessed such marvellous vitality, that when the Persians burned it after sacking the town it immediately burst forth into new shoots.

The principal festival held in honour of this divinity was the Panathenaea.

The owl, cock, and serpent were the animals sacred to her, and her sacrifices were rams, bulls, and cows.

# Ares

**ARES, THE SON** of Zeus and Hera, was the god of war, who gloried in strife for its own sake; he loved the tumult and havoc of the battlefield, and delighted in slaughter and extermination; in fact he presents no benevolent aspect which could possibly react favourably upon human life.

Epic poets, in particular, represent the god of battles as a wild ungovernable warrior, who passes through the armies like a whirlwind, hurling to the ground the brave and cowardly alike; destroying chariots and helmets, and triumphing over the terrible desolation which he produces.

In all the myths concerning Ares, his sister Athene ever appears in opposition to him, endeavouring by every means in her power to defeat his bloodthirsty designs. Thus she assists the divine hero Diomedes at the siege of Troy, to overcome Ares in battle, and so well does he profit by her timely aid, that he succeeds in wounding the sanguinary war-god, who makes his exit from the field, roaring like ten thousand bulls.

Ares appears to have been an object of aversion to all the gods of Olympus, Aphrodite alone excepted. As the son of Hera, he had inherited from his mother the strongest feelings of independence and contradiction, and as he took delight in upsetting that peaceful course of state-life which it was pre-eminently the care of Zeus to establish, he was naturally disliked and even hated by him.

When wounded by Diomedes, as above related, he complains to his father, but receives no sympathy from the otherwise kindly and beneficent ruler of Olympus, who thus angrily addresses him: “Do not trouble me with thy complaints, thou who art of all the gods of Olympus most hateful to me, for thou delightest in nought save war and strife. The very spirit of thy mother lives in thee, and wert thou not my son, long ago wouldst thou have lain deeper down in the bowels of the earth than the son of Uranus.”

Ares, upon one occasion, incurred the anger of Poseidon by slaying his son Halirrhothios, who had insulted Alcippe, the daughter of the war-god. For this deed, Poseidon summoned Ares to appear before the tribunal of

the Olympic gods, which was held upon a hill in Athens. Ares was acquitted, and this event is supposed to have given rise to the name Areopagus (or Hill of Ares), which afterwards became so famous as a court of justice. In the Gigantomachia, Ares was defeated by the Aloidae, the two giant-sons of Poseidon, who put him in chains, and kept him in prison for thirteen months.

Ares is represented as a man of youthful appearance; his tall muscular form combines great strength with wonderful agility. In his right hand he bears a sword or a mighty lance, while on the left arm he carries his round shield. His demoniacal surroundings are Terror and Fear; Enyo, the goddess of the war-cry; Keidomos, the demon of the noise of battles; and Eris (Contention), his twin-sister and companion, who always precedes his chariot when he rushes to the fight, the latter being evidently a simile of the poets to express the fact that war follows contention.

Eris is represented as a woman of florid complexion, with dishevelled hair, and her whole appearance angry and menacing. In one hand she brandishes a poniard and a hissing adder, whilst in the other she carries a burning torch. Her dress is torn and disorderly, and her hair intertwined with venomous snakes. This divinity was never invoked by mortals, except when they desired her assistance for the accomplishment of evil purposes.

# Hephaestus

**HEPHAESTUS, THE SON** of Zeus and Hera, was the god of fire in its beneficial aspect, and the presiding deity over all workmanship accomplished by means of this useful element. He was universally honoured, not only as the god of all mechanical arts, but also as a house and hearth divinity, who exercised a beneficial influence on civilized society in general. Unlike the other Greek divinities, he was ugly and deformed, being awkward in his movements, and limping in his gait. This latter defect originated, as we have already seen, in the wrath of his father Zeus, who hurled him down from heaven in consequence of his taking the part of Hera, in one of the domestic disagreements, which so frequently arose between this royal pair. Hephaestus was a whole day falling from Olympus to the earth, where he at length alighted on the island of Lemnos. The inhabitants of the country, seeing him descending through the air, received him in their arms; but in spite of their care, his leg was broken by the fall, and he remained ever afterwards lame in one foot. Grateful for the kindness of the Lemnians, he henceforth took up his abode in their island, and there built for himself a superb palace, and forges for the pursuit of his avocation. He instructed the people how to work in metals, and also taught them other valuable and useful arts.

It is said that the first work of Hephaestus was a most ingenious throne of gold, with secret springs, which he presented to Hera. It was arranged in such a manner that, once seated, she found herself unable to move, and though all the gods endeavoured to extricate her, their efforts were unavailing. Hephaestus thus revenged himself on his mother for the cruelty she had always displayed towards him, on account of his want of comeliness and grace. Dionysus, the wine god, contrived, however, to intoxicate Hephaestus, and then induced him to return to Olympus, where, after having released the queen of heaven from her very undignified position, he became reconciled to his parents.

He now built for himself a glorious palace on Olympus, of shining gold, and made for the other deities those magnificent edifices which they

inhabited. He was assisted in his various and exquisitely skilful works of art, by two female statues of pure gold, formed by his own hand, which possessed the power of motion, and always accompanied him wherever he went. With the assistance of the Cyclops, he forged for Zeus his wonderful thunderbolts, thus investing his mighty father with a new power of terrible import. Zeus testified his appreciation of this precious gift, by bestowing upon Hephaestus the beautiful Aphrodite in marriage, but this was a questionable boon; for the lovely Aphrodite, who was the personification of all grace and beauty, felt no affection for her ungainly and unattractive spouse, and amused herself by ridiculing his awkward movements and unsightly person. On one occasion especially, when Hephaestus good-naturedly took upon himself the office of cup-bearer to the gods, his hobbling gait and extreme awkwardness created the greatest mirth amongst the celestials, in which his disloyal partner was the first to join, with unconcealed merriment.

Aphrodite greatly preferred Ares to her husband, and this preference naturally gave rise to much jealousy on the part of Hephaestus, and caused them great unhappiness.

Hephaestus appears to have been an indispensable member of the Olympic Assembly, where he plays the part of smith, armourer, chariot-builder, etc. As already mentioned, he constructed the palaces where the gods resided, fashioned the golden shoes with which they trod the air or water, built for them their wonderful chariots, and shod with brass the horses of celestial breed, which conveyed these glittering equipages over land and sea. He also made the tripods which moved of themselves in and out of the celestial halls, formed for Zeus the far-famed aegis, and erected the magnificent palace of the sun. He also created the brazen-footed bulls of Aeetes, which breathed flames from their nostrils, sent forth clouds of smoke, and filled the air with their roaring.

Among his most renowned works of art for the use of mortals were: the armour of Achilles and Aeneas, the beautiful necklace of Harmonia, and the crown of Ariadne; but his masterpiece was Pandora, of whom a detailed account has already been given.

There was a temple on Mount Etna erected in his honour, which none but the pure and virtuous were permitted to enter. The entrance to this temple was guarded by dogs, which possessed the extraordinary faculty of being

able to discriminate between the righteous and the unrighteous, fawning upon and caressing the good, whilst they rushed upon all evil-doers and drove them away.

Hephaestus is usually represented as a powerful, brawny, and very muscular man of middle height and mature age; his strong uplifted arm is raised in the act of striking the anvil with a hammer, which he holds in one hand, whilst with the other he is turning a thunderbolt, which an eagle beside him is waiting to carry to Zeus. The principal seat of his worship was the island of Lemnos, where he was regarded with peculiar veneration.

# Dionysus

**DIONYSUS WAS THE** god of wine, and the personification of the blessings of Nature in general.

The worship of this divinity, which is supposed to have been introduced into Greece from Asia (in all probability from India), first took root in Thrace, whence it gradually spread into other parts of Greece.

Dionysus was the son of Zeus and Semele, and was snatched by Zeus from the devouring flames in which his mother perished, when he appeared to her in all the splendour of his divine glory. The motherless child was intrusted to the charge of Hermes, who conveyed him to Semele's sister, Ino. But Hera, still implacable in her vengeance, visited Athamas, the husband of Ino, with madness, and the child's life being no longer safe, he was transferred to the fostering care of the nymphs of Mount Nysa. An aged satyr named Silenus, the son of Pan, took upon himself the office of guardian and preceptor to the young god, who, in his turn, became much attached to his kind tutor; hence we see Silenus always figuring as one of the chief personages in the various expeditions of the wine-god.

Dionysus passed an innocent and uneventful childhood, roaming through the woods and forests, surrounded by nymphs, satyrs, and shepherds. During one of these rambles, he found a fruit growing wild, of a most refreshing and cooling nature. This was the vine, from which he subsequently learnt to extract a juice which formed a most exhilarating beverage. After his companions had partaken freely of it, they felt their whole being pervaded by an unwonted sense of pleasurable excitement, and gave full vent to their overflowing exuberance, by shouting, singing, and dancing. Their numbers were soon swelled by a crowd, eager to taste a beverage productive of such extraordinary results, and anxious to join in the worship of a divinity to whom they were indebted for this new enjoyment. Dionysus, on his part, seeing how agreeably his discovery had affected his immediate followers, resolved to extend the boon to mankind in general. He saw that wine, used in moderation, would enable man to

enjoy a happier, and more sociable existence, and that, under its invigorating influence, the sorrowful might, for a while, forget their grief and the sick their pain. He accordingly gathered round him his zealous followers, and they set forth on their travels, planting the vine and teaching its cultivation wherever they went.

We now behold Dionysus at the head of a large army composed of men, women, fauns, and satyrs, all bearing in their hands the Thyrsus (a staff entwined with vine-branches surmounted by a fir-cone), and clashing together cymbals and other musical instruments. Seated in a chariot drawn by panthers, and accompanied by thousands of enthusiastic followers, Dionysus made a triumphal progress through Syria, Egypt, Arabia, India, etc., conquering all before him, founding cities, and establishing on every side a more civilized and sociable mode of life among the inhabitants of the various countries through which he passed.

## Return to Greece

When Dionysus returned to Greece from his Eastern expedition, he encountered great opposition from Lycurgus, king of Thrace, and Pentheus, king of Thebes. The former, highly disapproving of the wild revels which attended the worship of the wine-god, drove away his attendants, the nymphs of Nysa, from that sacred mountain, and so effectually intimidated Dionysus, that he precipitated himself into the sea, where he was received into the arms of the ocean-nymph, Thetis. But the impious king bitterly expiated his sacrilegious conduct. He was punished with the loss of his reason, and, during one of his mad paroxysms, killed his own son Dryas, whom he mistook for a vine.

Pentheus, king of Thebes, seeing his subjects so completely infatuated by the riotous worship of this new divinity, and fearing the demoralizing effects of the unseemly nocturnal orgies held in honour of the wine-god, strictly prohibited his people from taking any part in the wild Bacchanalian revels. Anxious to save him from the consequences of his impiety, Dionysus appeared to him under the form of a youth in the king’s train, and earnestly warned him to desist from his denunciations. But the well-meant admonition failed in its purpose, for Pentheus only became more incensed at this interference, and, commanding Dionysus to be cast into prison, caused the most cruel preparations to be made for his

immediate execution. But the god soon freed himself from his ignoble confinement, for scarcely had his jailers departed, ere the prison-doors opened of themselves, and, bursting asunder his iron chains, he escaped to rejoin his devoted followers.

Meanwhile, the mother of the king and her sisters, inspired with Bacchanalian fury, had repaired to Mount Cithaeron, in order to join the worshippers of the wine-god in those dreadful orgies which were solemnized exclusively by women, and at which no man was allowed to be present. Enraged at finding his commands thus openly disregarded by the members of his own family, Pentheus resolved to witness for himself the excesses of which he had heard such terrible reports, and for this purpose, concealed himself behind a tree on Mount Cithaeron; but his hiding-place being discovered, he was dragged out by the half-maddened crew of Bacchantes and, horrible to relate, he was torn in pieces by his own mother Agave and her two sisters.

## Dionysus and Midas

Dionysus, having established his worship in various parts of the world, descended to the realm of shades in search of his ill-fated mother, whom he conducted to Olympus, where, under the name of Thyone, she was admitted into the assembly of the immortal gods.

Among the most noted worshippers of Dionysus was Midas, the wealthy king of Phrygia. Upon one occasion Silenus, the preceptor and friend of Dionysus, being in an intoxicated condition, strayed into the rose-gardens of this monarch, where he was found by some of the king’s attendants, who bound him with roses and conducted him to the presence of their royal master. Midas treated the aged satyr with the greatest consideration, and, after entertaining him hospitably for ten days, led him back to Dionysus, who was so grateful for the kind attention shown to his old friend, that he offered to grant Midas any favour he chose to demand; whereupon the avaricious monarch, not content with his boundless wealth, and still thirsting for more, desired that everything he touched might turn to gold. The request was complied with in so literal a sense, that the now wretched Midas bitterly repented his folly and cupidity, for, when the pangs of hunger assailed him, and he essayed to appease his cravings, the food became gold ere he could swallow it; as he raised the cup of wine to

his parched lips, the sparkling draught was changed into the metal he had so coveted, and when at length, wearied and faint, he stretched his aching frame on his hitherto luxurious couch, this also was transformed into the substance which had now become the curse of his existence. The despairing king at last implored the god to take back the fatal gift, and Dionysus, pitying his unhappy plight, desired him to bathe in the river Pactolus, a small stream in Lydia, in order to lose the power which had become the bane of his life. Midas joyfully obeying the injunction, was at once freed from the consequences of his avaricious demand, and from this time forth the sands of the river Pactolus have ever contained grains of gold.

## Representations of Dionysus

Representations of Dionysus are of two kinds. According to the earliest conceptions, he appears as a grave and dignified man in the prime of life; his countenance is earnest, thoughtful, and benevolent; he wears a full beard, and is draped from head to foot in the garb of an Eastern monarch. But the sculptors of a later period represent him as a youth of singular beauty, though of somewhat effeminate appearance; the expression of the countenance is gentle and winning; the limbs are supple and gracefully moulded; and the hair, which is adorned by a wreath of vine or ivy leaves, falls over the shoulders in long curls. In one hand he bears the Thyrsus, and in the other a drinking-cup with two handles, these being his distinguishing attributes. He is often represented riding on a panther, or seated in a chariot drawn by lions, tigers, panthers, or lynxes.

Being the god of wine, which is calculated to promote sociability, he rarely appears alone, but is usually accompanied by Bacchantes, satyrs, and mountain-nymphs.

Dionysus was regarded as the patron of the drama, and at the state festival of the Dionysia, which was celebrated with great pomp in the city of Athens, dramatic entertainments took place in his honour, for which all the renowned Greek dramatists of antiquity composed their immortal tragedies and comedies.

He was also a prophetic divinity, and possessed oracles, the principal of which was that on Mount Rhodope in Thrace.

The tiger, lynx, panther, dolphin, serpent, and ass were sacred to this god. His favourite plants were the vine, ivy, laurel, and asphodel. His sacrifices consisted of goats, probably on account of their being destructive to vineyards.

# Hermes

**HERMES WAS** the swift-footed messenger, and trusted ambassador of all the gods, and conductor of shades to Hades. He presided over the rearing and education of the young, and encouraged gymnastic exercises and athletic pursuits, for which reason, all gymnasiums and wrestling schools throughout Greece were adorned with his statues. He is said to have invented the alphabet, and to have taught the art of interpreting foreign languages, and his versatility, sagacity, and cunning were so extraordinary, that Zeus invariably chose him as his attendant, when, disguised as a mortal, he journeyed on earth.

Hermes was worshipped as god of eloquence, most probably from the fact that, in his office as ambassador, this faculty was indispensable to the successful issue of the negotiations with which he was entrusted. He was regarded as the god who granted increase and prosperity to flocks and herds, and, on this account, was worshipped with special veneration by herdsmen.

In ancient times, trade was conducted chiefly by means of the exchange of cattle. Hermes, therefore, as god of herdsmen, came to be regarded as the protector of merchants, and, as ready wit and adroitness are valuable qualities both in buying and selling, he was also looked upon as the patron of artifice and cunning. Indeed, so deeply was this notion rooted in the minds of the Greek people, that he was popularly believed to be also god of thieves, and of all persons who live by their wits.

As the patron of commerce, Hermes was naturally supposed to be the promoter of intercourse among nations; hence, he is essentially the god of travellers, over whose safety he presided, and he severely punished those who refused assistance to the lost or weary wayfarer. He was also guardian of streets and roads, and his statues, called Hermae (which were pillars of stone surmounted by a head of Hermes), were placed at cross-roads, and frequently in streets and public squares.

Being the god of all undertakings in which gain was a feature, he was worshipped as the giver of wealth and good luck, and any unexpected

stroke of fortune was attributed to his influence. He also presided over the game of dice, in which he is said to have been instructed by Apollo.

As messenger of the gods, we find him employed on all occasions requiring special skill, tact, or despatch. Thus he conducts Hera, Athene, and Aphrodite to Paris, leads Priam to Achilles to demand the body of Hector, binds Prometheus to Mount Caucasus, secures Ixion to the eternally revolving wheel, destroys Argus, the hundred-eyed guardian of Io, etc. etc.

As conductor of shades, Hermes was always invoked by the dying to grant them a safe and speedy passage across the Styx. He also possessed the power of bringing back departed spirits to the upper world, and was, therefore, the mediator between the living and the dead.

## Lover of Tricks

The poets relate many amusing stories of the youthful tricks played by this mischief-loving god upon the other immortals. For instance, he had the audacity to extract the Medusa’s head from the shield of Athene, which he playfully attached to the back of Hephaestus; he also stole the girdle of Aphrodite; deprived Artemis of her arrows, and Ares of his spear, but these acts were always performed with such graceful dexterity, combined with such perfect good humour, that even the gods and goddesses he thus provoked, were fain to pardon him, and he became a universal favourite with them all.

## Hermes and Herse

It is said that Hermes was one day flying over Athens, when, looking down into the city, he beheld a number of maidens returning in solemn procession from the temple of Pallas-Athene. Foremost among them was Herse, the beautiful daughter of king Cecrops, and Hermes was so struck with her exceeding loveliness that he determined to seek an interview with her. He accordingly presented himself at the royal palace, and begged her sister Agraulos to favour his suit; but, being of an avaricious turn of mind, she refused to do so without the payment of an enormous sum of money. It did not take the messenger of the gods long to obtain the means of fulfilling this condition, and he soon returned with a well-filled purse.

But meanwhile Athene, to punish the cupidity of Agraulos, had caused the demon of envy to take possession of her, and the consequence was, that, being unable to contemplate the happiness of her sister, she sat down before the door, and resolutely refused to allow Hermes to enter. He tried every persuasion and blandishment in his power, but she still remained obstinate. At last, his patience being exhausted, he changed her into a mass of black stone, and, the obstacle to his wishes being removed, he succeeded in persuading Herse to become his wife.

## Representations of Hermes

In his statues, Hermes is represented as a beardless youth, with broad chest and graceful but muscular limbs; the face is handsome and intelligent, and a genial smile of kindly benevolence plays round the delicately chiselled lips.

As messenger of the gods he wears the Petasus and Talaria, and bears in his hand the Caduceus or herald’s staff.

As god of eloquence, he is often represented with chains of gold hanging from his lips, whilst, as the patron of merchants, he bears a purse in his hand.

The wonderful excavations in Olympia, to which allusion has already been made, have brought to light an exquisite marble group of Hermes and the infant Bacchus, by Praxiteles. In this great work of art, Hermes is represented as a young and handsome man, who is looking down kindly and affectionately at the child resting on his arm, but unfortunately nothing remains of the infant save the right hand, which is laid lovingly on the shoulder of his protector.

The sacrifices to Hermes consisted of incense, honey, cakes, pigs, and especially lambs and young goats. As god of eloquence, the tongues of animals were sacrificed to him.

# Aphrodite

**APHRODITE** (from *aphros,* sea-foam, and *dite*, issued), the daughter of Zeus and a sea-nymph called Dione, was the goddess of Love and Beauty.

Dione, being a sea-nymph, gave birth to her daughter beneath the waves; but the child of the heaven-inhabiting Zeus was forced to ascend from the ocean-depths and mount to the snow-capped summits of Olympus, in order to breathe that ethereal and most refined atmosphere which pertains to the celestial gods.

Aphrodite was the mother of Eros, the god of Love, also of Aeneas, the great Trojan hero and the head of that Greek colony which settled in Italy, and from which arose the city of Rome. As a mother Aphrodite claims our sympathy for the tenderness she exhibits towards her children. Homer tells us in his Iliad, how, when Aeneas was wounded in battle, she came to his assistance, regardless of personal danger, and was herself severely wounded in attempting to save his life.

Aphrodite was tenderly attached to a lovely youth, called Adonis, whose exquisite beauty has become proverbial. He was a motherless babe, and Aphrodite, taking pity on him, placed him in a chest and entrusted him to the care of Persephone, who became so fond of the beautiful youth that she refused to part with him. Zeus, being appealed to by the rival foster-mothers, decided that Adonis should spend four months of every year with Persephone, four with Aphrodite, whilst during the remaining four months he should be left to his own devices. He became, however, so attached to Aphrodite that he voluntarily devoted to her the time at his own disposal. Adonis was killed, during the chase, by a wild boar, to the great grief of Aphrodite, who bemoaned his loss so persistently that Hades, moved with pity, permitted him to pass six months of every year with her, whilst the remaining half of the year was spent by him in the lower world.

Aphrodite possessed a magic girdle which she frequently lent to unhappy maidens suffering from the pangs of unrequited love, as it was endowed with the power of inspiring affection for the wearer, whom it invested with every attribute of grace, beauty, and fascination.

Her usual attendants are the Charites or Graces (Euphrosyne, Aglaia, and Thalia), who are represented undraped and intertwined in a loving embrace.

The animals sacred to her were the dove, swan, swallow, and sparrow. Her favourite plants were the myrtle, apple-tree, rose, and poppy.

The worship of Aphrodite is supposed to have been introduced into Greece from Central Asia. There is no doubt that she was originally identical with the famous Astarté, the Ashtoreth of the Bible, against whose idolatrous worship and infamous rites the prophets of old hurled forth their sublime and powerful anathemas.

## Aphrodite's Origins

In Hesiod's *Theogony* she is supposed to belong to the more ancient divinities, and, whilst those of later date are represented as having descended one from another, and all more or less from Zeus, Aphrodite has a variously-accounted-for, yet independent origin.

The most poetical version of her birth is that when Uranus was wounded by his son Cronus, his blood mingled with the foam of the sea, whereupon the bubbling waters at once assumed a rosy tint, and from their depths arose, in all the surpassing glory of her loveliness, Aphrodite, goddess of love and beauty! Shaking her long, fair tresses, the water-drops rolled down into the beautiful sea-shell in which she stood, and became transformed into pure glistening pearls. Wafted by the soft and balmy breezes, she floated on to Cythera, and was thence transported to the island of Cyprus. Lightly she stepped on shore, and under the gentle pressure of her delicate foot the dry and rigid sand became transformed into a verdant meadow, where every varied shade of colour and every sweet odour charmed the senses. The whole island of Cyprus became clothed with verdure, and greeted this fairest of all created beings with a glad smile of friendly welcome. Here she was received by the Seasons, who decked her with garments of immortal fabric, encircling her fair brow with a wreath of purest gold, whilst from her ears depended costly rings, and a glittering chain embraced her swan-like throat. And now, arrayed in all the panoply of her irresistible charms, the nymphs escort her to the dazzling halls of Olympus, where she is received with ecstatic enthusiasm by the admiring gods and goddesses. The gods all vied with each other in aspiring to the

honour of her hand, but Hephaestus became the envied possessor of this lovely being, who, however, proved as faithless as she was beautiful, and caused her husband much unhappiness, owing to the preference she showed at various times for some of the other gods and also for mortal men.

The celebrated Venus of Milo, now in the Louvre, is an exquisite statue of this divinity. The head is beautifully formed; the rich waves of hair descend on her rather low but broad forehead and are caught up gracefully in a small knot at the back of the head; the expression of the face is most bewitching, and bespeaks the perfect joyousness of a happy nature combined with the dignity of a goddess; the drapery falls in careless folds from the waist downwards, and her whole attitude is the embodiment of all that is graceful and lovely in womanhood. She is of medium height, and the form is perfect in its symmetry and faultless proportions.

Aphrodite is also frequently represented in the act of confining her dripping locks in a knot, whilst her attendant nymphs envelop her in a gauzy veil.

# Other Divinities

## Introduction

**ALONGSIDE THE MAJOR** Olympian Gods there existed a vast number of other deities who also had a major role to play in Greek mythology. These Gods controlled and embodied different aspects of life on earth and even beyond, such as n the case of Hades – who was the son of Cronus and Rhea but dwelt in the underworld rather than on Mount Olympus. Many of these beings were associated with natural phenomenon – such as Eos (Dawn), Nyx (Night) or the many varieties of nymph; whilst others were responsible for such cosmic forces as fate, inspiration and punishment of the guilty. We have selected several of these divinites to explore in more detail in the following chapter, though this is by no means an exhaustive list.

# Hades

**HADES, AIDES, OR AIDONEUS** was the son of Cronus and Rhea, and the youngest brother of Zeus and Poseidon. He was the ruler of that subterranean region called Erebus, which was inhabited by the shades or spirits of the dead, and also by those dethroned and exiled deities who had been vanquished by Zeus and his allies. Hades, the grim and gloomy monarch of this lower world, was the successor of Erebus, that ancient primeval divinity after whom these realms were called.

The early Greeks regarded Hades in the light of their greatest foe, and Homer tells us that he was ‘of all the gods the most detested,’ being in their eyes the grim robber who stole from them their nearest and dearest, and eventually deprived each of them of their share in terrestrial existence. His name was so feared that it was never mentioned by mortals, who, when they invoked him, struck the earth with their hands, and in sacrificing to him turned away their faces.

The belief of the people with regard to a future state was, in the Homeric age, a sad and cheerless one. It was supposed that when a mortal ceased to exist, his spirit tenanted the shadowy outline of the human form it had quitted. These shadows, or shades as they were called, were driven by Hades into his dominions, where they passed their time, some in brooding over the vicissitudes of fortune which they had experienced on earth, others in regretting the lost pleasures they had enjoyed in life, but all in a condition of semi-consciousness, from which the intellect could only be roused to full activity by drinking of the blood of the sacrifices offered to their shades by living friends, which, for a time, endowed them with their former mental vigour. The only beings supposed to enjoy any happiness in a future state were the heroes, whose acts of daring and deeds of prowess had, during their life, reflected honour on the land of their birth; and even these, according to Homer, pined after their career of earthly activity. He tells us that when Odysseus visited the lower world at the command of Circe, and held communion with the shades of the heroes of the Trojan

war, Achilles assured him that he would rather be the poorest day-labourer on earth than reign supreme over the realm of shades.

## Hades' Dominions

The early Greek poets offer but scanty allusions to Erebus. Homer appears purposely to envelop these realms in vagueness and mystery, in order, probably, to heighten the sensation of awe inseparably connected with the lower world. In the *Odyssey* he describes the entrance to Erebus as being beyond the furthermost edge of Oceanus, in the far west, where dwelt the Cimmerians, enveloped in eternal mists and darkness.

The later poets mention various entrances to Erebus, which were for the most part caves and fissures. There was one in the mountain of Taenarum, another in Thesprotia, and a third, the most celebrated of all, in Italy, near the pestiferous Lake Avernus, over which it is said no bird could fly, so noxious were its exhalations.

In the dominions of Hades there were four great rivers, three of which had to be crossed by all the shades. These three were Acheron (sorrow), Cocytus (lamentation), and Styx (intense darkness), the sacred stream which flowed nine times round these realms.

The shades were ferried over the Styx by the grim, unshaven old boatman Charon, who, however, only took those whose bodies had received funereal rites on earth, and who had brought with them his indispensable toll, which was a small coin or obolus, usually placed under the tongue of a dead person for this purpose. If these conditions had not been fulfilled, the unhappy shades were left behind to wander up and down the banks for a hundred years as restless spirits.

On the opposite bank of the Styx was the tribunal of Minos, the supreme judge, before whom all shades had to appear, and who, after hearing full confession of their actions whilst on earth, pronounced the sentence of happiness or misery to which their deeds had entitled them. This tribunal was guarded by the terrible triple-headed dog Cerberus, who, with his three necks bristling with snakes, lay at full length on the ground – a formidable sentinel, who permitted all shades to enter, but none to return.

The happy spirits, destined to enjoy the delights of Elysium, passed out on the right, and proceeded to the golden palace where Hades and Persephone held their royal court, from whom they received a kindly

greeting, ere they set out for the Elysian Fields which lay beyond. This blissful region was replete with all that could charm the senses or please the imagination; the air was balmy and fragrant, rippling brooks flowed peacefully through the smiling meadows, which glowed with the varied hues of a thousand flowers, whilst the groves resounded with the joyous songs of birds. The occupations and amusements of the happy shades were of the same nature as those which they had delighted in whilst on earth. Here the warrior found his horses, chariots, and arms, the musician his lyre, and the hunter his quiver and bow.

In a secluded vale of Elysium there flowed a gentle, silent stream, called Lethe (oblivion), whose waters had the effect of dispelling care, and producing utter forgetfulness of former events. According to the Pythagorean doctrine of the transmigration of souls, it was supposed that after the shades had inhabited Elysium for a thousand years they were destined to animate other bodies on earth, and before leaving Elysium they drank of the river Lethe, in order that they might enter upon their new career without any remembrance of the past.

The guilty souls, after leaving the presence of Minos, were conducted to the great judgment-hall of Hades, whose massive walls of solid adamant were surrounded by the river Phlegethon, the waves of which rolled flames of fire, and lit up, with their lurid glare, these awful realms. In the interior sat the dread judge Rhadamanthus, who declared to each comer the precise torments which awaited him in Tartarus. The wretched sinners were then seized by the Furies, who scourged them with their whips, and dragged them along to the great gate, which closed the opening to Tartarus, into whose awful depths they were hurled, to suffer endless torture.

## Worshipping Hades

Hades is usually represented as a man of mature years and stern majestic mien, bearing a striking resemblance to his brother Zeus; but the gloomy and inexorable expression of the face contrasts forcibly with that peculiar benignity which so characterizes the countenance of the mighty ruler of heaven. He is seated on a throne of ebony, with his queen, the grave and sad Persephone, beside him, and wears a full beard, and long flowing black hair, which hangs straight down over his forehead; in his hand he either bears a two-pronged fork or the keys of the lower world, and at his feet sits

Cerberus. He is sometimes seen in a chariot of gold, drawn by four black horses, and wearing on his head a helmet made for him by the Cyclops, which rendered the wearer invisible. This helmet he frequently lent to mortals and immortals.

Hades, who was universally worshipped throughout Greece, had temples erected to his honour in Elis, Olympia, and also at Athens.

His sacrifices, which took place at night, consisted of black sheep, and the blood, instead of being sprinkled on the altars or received in vessels, as at other sacrifices, was permitted to run down into a trench, dug for this purpose. The officiating priests wore black robes, and were crowned with cypress.

The narcissus, maiden-hair, and cypress were sacred to this divinity.

# Themis

**THEMIS, WHO HAS** already been alluded to as the wife of Zeus, was the daughter of Cronus and Rhea, and personified those divine laws of justice and order by means of which the well-being and morality of communities are regulated. She presided over the assemblies of the people and the laws of hospitality. To her was entrusted the office of convoking the assembly of the gods, and she was also mistress of ritual and ceremony. On account of her great wisdom Zeus himself frequently sought her counsel and acted upon her advice. Themis was a prophetic divinity, and had an oracle near the river Cephissus in Boeotia.

She is usually represented as being in the full maturity of womanhood, of fair aspect, and wearing a flowing garment, which drapes her noble, majestic form; in her right hand she holds the sword of justice, and in her left the scales, which indicate the impartiality with which every cause is carefully weighed by her, her eyes being bandaged so that the personality of the individual should carry no weight with respect to the verdict.

This divinity is sometimes identified with Tyche, sometimes with Ananke.

Themis, like so many other Greek divinities, takes the place of a more ancient deity of the same name who was a daughter of Uranus and Gaea. This elder Themis inherited from her mother the gift of prophecy, and when she became merged into her younger representative she transmitted to her this prophetic power.

# Helios

**THE WORSHIP OF HELIOS** was introduced into Greece from Asia. According to the earliest conceptions of the Greeks he was not only the sun-god, but also the personification of life and all life-giving power, for light is well known to be an indispensable condition of all healthy terrestrial life. The worship of the sun was originally very widely spread, not only among the early Greeks themselves, but also among other primitive nations. To us the sun is simply the orb of light, which, high above our heads, performs each day the functions assigned to it by a mighty and invisible Power; we can, therefore, form but a faint idea of the impression which it produced upon the spirit of a people whose intellect was still in its infancy, and who believed, with child-like simplicity, that every power of nature was a divinity, which, according as its character was baleful or beneficent, worked for the destruction or benefit of the human race.

Helios, who was the son of the Titans Hyperion and Theia, is described as rising every morning in the east, preceded by his sister Eos (the Dawn), who, with her rosy fingers, paints the tips of the mountains, and draws aside that misty veil through which her brother is about to appear. When he has burst forth in all the glorious light of day, Eos disappears, and Helios now drives his flame-darting chariot along the accustomed track. This chariot, which is of burnished gold, is drawn by four fire-breathing steeds, behind which the young god stands erect with flashing eyes, his head surrounded with rays, holding in one hand the reins of those fiery coursers which in all hands save his are unmanageable. When towards evening he descends the curve in order to cool his burning forehead in the waters of the deep sea, he is followed closely by his sister Selene (the Moon), who is now prepared to take charge of the world, and illumine with her silver crescent the dusky night. Helios meanwhile rests from his labours, and, reclining softly on the cool fragrant couch prepared for him by the sea-nymphs, recruits himself for another life-giving, joy-inspiring, and beauteous day.

It may appear strange that, although the Greeks considered the earth to be a flat circle, no explanation is given of the fact that Helios sinks down in the far west regularly every evening, and yet reappears as regularly every morning in the east. Whether he was supposed to pass through Tartarus, and thus regain the opposite extremity through the bowels of the earth, or whether they thought he possessed any other means of making this transit, there is not a line in either Homer or Hesiod to prove. In later times, however, the poets invented the graceful fiction, that when Helios had finished his course, and reached the western side of the curve, a winged-boat, or cup, which had been made for him by Hephaestus, awaited him there, and conveyed him rapidly, with his glorious equipage, to the east, where he recommenced his bright and glowing career.

This divinity was invoked as a witness when a solemn oath was taken, as it was believed that nothing escaped his all-seeing eye, and it was this fact which enabled him to inform Demeter of the fate of her daughter, as already related. He was supposed to possess flocks and herds in various localities, which may possibly be intended to represent the days and nights of the year, or the stars of heaven.

The chief seat of the worship of Helios was the island of Rhodes, which according to the following myth was his especial territory. At the time of the Titanomachia, when the gods were dividing the world by lot, Helios happened to be absent, and consequently received no share. He, therefore, complained to Zeus, who proposed to have a new allotment, but this Helios would not allow, saying, that as he pursued his daily journey, his penetrating eye had beheld a lovely, fertile island lying beneath the waves of the ocean, and that if the immortals would swear to give him the undisturbed possession of this spot, he would be content to accept it as his share of the universe. The gods took the oath, whereupon the island of Rhodes immediately raised itself above the surface of the waters.

The famous Colossus of Rhodes, which was one of the seven wonders of the world, was erected in honour of Helios. This wonderful statue was 105 feet high, and was formed entirely of brass; it formed the entrance to the harbour at Rhodes, and the largest vessel could easily sail between the legs, which stood on moles, each side of the harbour. Though so gigantic, it was perfectly proportioned in every part. Some idea of its size may be gained from the fact that very few people were able to span the thumb of

this statue with their arms. In the interior of the Colossus was a winding staircase leading to the top, from the summit of which, by means of a telescope, the coast of Syria, and also the shores of Egypt, are said to have been visible.

# Eos

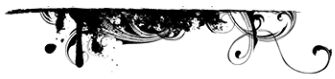
**EOS, THE DAWN**, like her brother Helios, whose advent she always announced, was also deified by the early Greeks. She too had her own chariot, which she drove across the vast horizon both morning and night, before and after the sun-god. Hence she is not merely the personification of the rosy morn, but also of twilight, for which reason her palace is placed in the west, on the island Aeaea. The abode of Eos is a magnificent structure, surrounded by flowery meads and velvety lawns, where nymphs and other immortal beings, wind in and out in the mazy figures of the dance, whilst the music of a sweetly-tuned melody accompanies their graceful, gliding movements.

Eos is described by the poets as a beautiful maiden with rosy arms and fingers, and large wings, whose plumage is of an ever-changing hue; she bears a star on her forehead, and a torch in her hand. Wrapping round her the rich folds of her violet-tinged mantle, she leaves her couch before the break of day, and herself yokes her two horses, Lampetus and Phaethon, to her glorious chariot. She then hastens with active cheerfulness to open the gates of heaven, in order to herald the approach of her brother, the god of day, whilst the tender plants and flowers, revived by the morning dew, lift their heads to welcome her as she passes.

Eos first married the Titan Astraeus and their children were Heosphorus (Hesperus), the evening star, and the winds. She afterwards became united to Tithonus, son of Laomedon, king of Troy, who had won her affection by his unrivalled beauty; and Eos, unhappy at the thought of their being ever separated by death, obtained for him from Zeus the gift of immortality, forgetting, however, to add to it that of eternal youth. The consequence was that when, in the course of time, Tithonus grew old and decrepid, and lost all the beauty which had won her admiration, Eos became disgusted with his infirmities, and at last shut him up in a chamber, where soon little else was left of him but his voice, which had now sunk into a weak, feeble quaver. According to some of the later poets, he became so weary of his cheerless and miserable existence, that he entreated to be allowed to die.

This was, however, impossible; but Eos, pitying his unhappy condition, exerted her divine power, and changed him into a grasshopper, which is, as it were, all voice, and whose monotonous, ceaseless chirpings may not inaptly be compared to the meaningless babble of extreme old age.

# Selene



**JUST AS HELIOS** personified the sun, so his sister Selene represented the moon, and was supposed to drive her chariot across the sky whilst her brother was reposing after the toils of the day.

When the shades of evening began to enfold the earth, the two milk-white steeds of Selene rose out of the mysterious depths of Oceanus. Seated in a silvery chariot, and accompanied by her daughter Herse, the goddess of the dew, appeared the mild and gentle queen of the night, with a crescent on her fair brow, a gauzy veil flowing behind, and a lighted torch in her hand.

Selene greatly admired a beautiful young shepherd named Endymion, to whom Zeus had accorded the privilege of eternal youth, combined with the faculty of sleeping whenever he desired, and as long as he wished. Seeing this lovely youth fast asleep on Mount Latmus, Selene was so struck with his beauty, that she came down every night from heaven to watch over and protect him.

# Eros

**ACCORDING TO** Hesiod's *Theogony*, Eros, the divine spirit of Love, sprang forth from Chaos, while all was still in confusion, and by his beneficent power reduced to order and harmony the shapeless, conflicting elements, which, under his influence, began to assume distinct forms. This ancient Eros is represented as a full-grown and very beautiful youth, crowned with flowers, and leaning on a shepherd's crook.

In the course of time, this beautiful conception gradually faded away, and though occasional mention still continues to be made of the Eros of Chaos, he is replaced by the son of Aphrodite, the popular, mischief-loving little god of Love, so familiar to us all.

In one of the myths concerning Eros, Aphrodite is described as complaining to Themis, that her son, though so beautiful, did not appear to increase in stature; whereupon Themis suggested that his small proportions were probably attributable to the fact of his being always alone, and advised his mother to let him have a companion. Aphrodite accordingly gave him, as a playfellow, his younger brother Anteros (requited love), and soon had the gratification of seeing the little Eros begin to grow and thrive; but, curious to relate, this desirable result only continued as long as the brothers remained together, for the moment they were separated, Eros shrank once more to his original size.

By degrees the conception of Eros became multiplied and we hear of little love-gods (Amors), who appear under the most charming and diversified forms. These love-gods, who afforded to artists inexhaustible subjects for the exercise of their imagination, are represented as being engaged in various occupations, such as hunting, fishing, rowing, driving chariots, and even busying themselves in mechanical labour.

Eros is represented as a lovely boy, with rounded limbs, and a merry, roguish expression. He has golden wings, and a quiver slung over his shoulder, which contained his magical and unerring arrows; in one hand he bears his golden bow, and in the other a torch.

He is also frequently depicted riding on a lion, dolphin, or eagle, or seated in a chariot drawn by stags or wild boars, undoubtedly emblematical of the power of love as the subduer of all nature, even of the wild animals.

# Nike

**NIKE, THE GODDESS** of victory, was the daughter of the Titan Pallas, and of Styx, the presiding nymph of the river of that name in the lower world.

In her statues, Nike somewhat resembles Athene, but may easily be recognized by her large, graceful wings and flowing drapery, which is negligently fastened on the right shoulder, and only partially conceals her lovely form. In her left hand, she holds aloft a crown of laurel, and in the right, a palm-branch. In ancient sculpture, Nike is usually represented in connection with colossal statues of Zeus or Pallas-Athene, in which case she is life-sized, and stands on a ball, held in the open palm of the deity she accompanies. Sometimes she is represented engaged in inscribing the victory of a conqueror on his shield, her right foot being slightly raised and placed on a ball.

A celebrated temple was erected to this divinity on the Acropolis at Athens, which is still to be seen, and is in excellent preservation.

# Divine Punishment

**BOTH THE** Furies and the Harpies were employed by the gods as instruments for the punishment of the guilty.

## The Furies

The Furies, or Erinyes, were female divinities who personified the torturing pangs of an evil conscience, and the remorse which inevitably follows wrong-doing.

Their names were Alecto, Megaera, and Tisiphone, and their origin was variously accounted for. According to Hesiod, they sprang from the blood of Uranus, when wounded by Cronus, and were hence supposed to be the embodiment of all the terrible imprecations, which the defeated deity called down upon the head of his rebellious son. According to other accounts they were the daughters of Night.

Their place of abode was the lower world, where they were employed by Hades and Persephone to chastise and torment those shades who, during their earthly career, had committed crimes, and had not been reconciled to the gods before descending to Hades.

But their sphere of action was not confined to the realm of shades, for they appeared upon earth as the avenging deities who relentlessly pursued and punished murderers, perjurers, those who had failed in duty to their parents, in hospitality to strangers, or in the respect due to old age. Nothing escaped the piercing glance of these terrible divinities, from whom flight was unavailing, for no corner of the earth was so remote as to be beyond their reach, nor did any mortal dare to offer to their victims an asylum from their persecutions.

The Furies are frequently represented with wings; their bodies are black, blood drips from their eyes, and snakes twine in their hair. In their hands they bear either a dagger, scourge, torch, or serpent.

When they pursued Orestes they constantly held up a mirror to his horrified gaze, in which he beheld the face of his murdered mother.

These divinities were also called Eumenides, which signifies the ‘well-meaning’ or ‘soothed goddesses;’ This appellation was given to them

because they were so feared and dreaded that people dared not call them by their proper title, and hoped by this means to propitiate their wrath.

In later times the Furies came to be regarded as salutary agencies, who, by severely punishing sin, upheld the cause of morality and social order, and thus contributed to the welfare of mankind. They now lose their awe-inspiring aspect, and are represented, more especially in Athens, as earnest maidens, dressed, like Artemis, in short tunics suitable for the chase, but still retaining, in their hands, the wand of office in the form of a snake.

Their sacrifices consisted of black sheep and a libation composed of a mixture of honey and water, called Nephalia. A celebrated temple was erected to the Eumenides at Athens, near the Areopagus.

## The Harpies

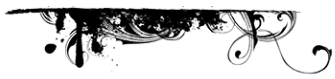
The Harpies were three female divinities, daughters of Thaumas and Electra, called Aello, Ocypete, and Celaeno.

They were represented with the head of a fair-haired maiden and the body of a vulture, and were perpetually devoured by the pangs of insatiable hunger, which caused them to torment their victims by robbing them of their food; this they either devoured with great gluttony, or defiled in such a manner as to render it unfit to be eaten.

Their wonderfully rapid flight far surpassed that of birds, or even of the winds themselves. If any mortal suddenly and unaccountably disappeared, the Harpies were believed to have carried him off. Thus they were supposed to have borne away the daughters of King Pandareos to act as servants to the Erinyes.

The Harpies would appear to be personifications of sudden tempests, which, with ruthless violence, sweep over whole districts, carrying off or injuring all before them.

# The Muses



**OF ALL THE** Olympic deities, none occupy a more distinguished position than the Muses, the nine beautiful daughters of Zeus and Mnemosyne.

With regard to the origin of the Muses, it is said that they were created by Zeus in answer to a request on the part of the victorious deities, after the war with the Titans, that some special divinities should be called into existence, in order to commemorate in song the glorious deeds of the Olympian gods.

In their original signification, they presided merely over music, song, and dance; but with the progress of civilization the arts and sciences claimed their special presiding divinities, and we see these graceful creations, in later times, sharing among them various functions, such as poetry, astronomy, etc.

The Muses were honoured alike by mortals and immortals. In Olympus, where Apollo acted as their leader, no banquet or festivity was considered complete without their joy-inspiring presence, and on earth no social gathering was celebrated without libations being poured out to them; nor was any task involving intellectual effort ever undertaken, without earnestly supplicating their assistance. They endowed their chosen favourites with knowledge, wisdom, and understanding; they bestowed upon the orator the gift of eloquence, inspired the poet with his noblest thoughts, and the musician with his sweetest harmonies.

Like so many of the Greek divinities, however, the refined conception of the Muses is somewhat marred by the acerbity with which they punished any effort on the part of mortals to rival them in their divine powers. An instance of this is seen in the case of Thamyris, a Thracian bard, who presumed to invite them to a trial of skill in music. Having vanquished him, they not only afflicted him with blindness, but deprived him also of the power of song.

Another example of the manner in which the gods punished presumption and vanity is seen in the story of the daughters of King Pierus. Proud of

the perfection to which they had brought their skill in music, they presumed to challenge the Muses themselves in the art over which they specially presided. The contest took place on Mount Helicon, and it is said that when the mortal maidens commenced their song, the sky became dark and misty, whereas when the Muses raised their heavenly voices, all nature seemed to rejoice, and Mount Helicon itself moved with exultation. The Pierides were signally defeated, and were transformed by the Muses into singing birds, as a punishment for having dared to challenge comparison with the immortals.

Undeterred by the above example, the Sirens also entered into a similar contest. The songs of the Muses were loyal and true, whilst those of the Sirens were the false and deceptive strains with which so many unfortunate mariners had been lured to their death. The Sirens were defeated by the Muses, and as a mark of humiliation, were deprived of the feathers with which their bodies were adorned.

The oldest seat of the worship of the Muses was Pieria in Thrace, where they were supposed to have first seen the light of day. Pieria is a district on one of the sloping declivities of Mount Olympus, whence a number of rivulets, as they flow towards the plains beneath, produce those sweet, soothing sounds, which may possibly have suggested this spot as a fitting home for the presiding divinities of song.

They dwelt on the summits of Mounts Helicon, Parnassus, and Pindus, and loved to haunt the springs and fountains which gushed forth amidst these rocky heights, all of which were sacred to them and to poetic inspiration. Aganippe and Hippocrene on Mount Helicon, and the Castalian spring on Mount Parnassus, were sacred to the Muses. The latter flowed between two lofty rocks above the city of Delphi, and in ancient times its waters were introduced into a square stone basin, where they were retained for the use of the Pythia and the priests of Apollo.

The libations to these divinities consisted of water, milk, and honey, but never of wine.

## Their Spheres of Influence

Their names and functions were as follows:

**Calliope**, the most honoured of the Muses, presided over heroic song and epic poetry, and is represented with a pencil in her hand, and a slate upon

her knee.

**Clio**, the muse of History, holds in her hand a roll of parchment, and wears a wreath of laurel.

**Melpomene**, the muse of Tragedy, bears a tragic mask.

**Thalia**, the muse of Comedy, carries in her right hand a shepherd’s crook, and has a comic mask beside her.

**Polyhymnia**, the muse of Sacred Hymns, is crowned with a wreath of laurel. She is always represented in a thoughtful attitude, and entirely enveloped in rich folds of drapery.

**Terpsichore**, the muse of Dance and choral song, is represented in the act of playing on a seven-stringed lyre.

**Urania**, the muse of Astronomy, stands erect, and bears in her left hand a celestial globe.

**Euterpe**, the muse of Harmony, is represented bearing a musical instrument, usually a flute.

**Erato**, the muse of Love and hymeneal songs, wears a wreath of laurel, and is striking the chords of a lyre.

# The Graces

**ALL THOSE GENTLER** attributes which beautify and refine human existence were personified by the Greeks under the form of three lovely sisters, Euphrosyne, Aglaia, and Thalia, the daughters of Zeus and Eurynome (or, according to later writers, of Dionysus and Aphrodite).

They are represented as beautiful, slender maidens in the full bloom of youth, with hands and arms lovingly intertwined, and are either undraped, or wear a fleecy, transparent garment of an ethereal fabric.

They portray every gentle emotion of the heart, which vents itself in friendship and benevolence, and were believed to preside over those qualities which constitute grace, modesty, unconscious beauty, gentleness, kindliness, innocent joy, purity of mind and body, and eternal youth.

They not only possessed the most perfect beauty themselves, but also conferred this gift upon others. All the enjoyments of life were enhanced by their presence, and were deemed incomplete without them; and wherever joy or pleasure, grace and gaiety reigned, there they were supposed to be present.

Temples and altars were everywhere erected in their honour, and people of all ages and of every rank in life entreated their favour. Incense was burnt daily upon their altars, and at every banquet they were invoked, and a libation poured out to them, as they not only heightened all enjoyment, but also by their refining influence moderated the exciting effects of wine.

Music, eloquence, poetry, and art, though the direct work of the Muses, received at the hands of the Graces an additional touch of refinement and beauty; for which reason they are always regarded as the friends of the Muses, with whom they lived on Mount Olympus.

Their special function was to act, in conjunction with the Seasons, as attendants upon Aphrodite, whom they adorned with wreaths of flowers, and she emerges from their hands like the Queen of Spring, perfumed with the odour of roses and violets, and all sweet-scented blossoms.

The Graces are frequently seen in attendance on other divinities; thus they carry music for Apollo, myrtles for Aphrodite, etc., and frequently

accompany the Muses, Eros, or Dionysus.

# The Fates

**THE ANCIENTS BELIEVED** that the duration of human existence and the destinies of mortals were regulated by three sister-goddesses, called Clotho, Lachesis, and Atropos, who were the daughters of Zeus and Themis.

The power which they wielded over the fate of man was significantly indicated under the figure of a thread, which they spun out for the life of each human being from his birth to the grave. This occupation they divided between them. Clotho wound the flax round the distaff, ready for her sister Lachesis, who span out the thread of life, which Atropos, with her scissors, relentlessly snapped asunder, when the career of an individual was about to terminate.

Homer speaks of one Fate only, the daughter of Night, who represents the moral force by which the universe is governed, and to whom both mortals and immortals were forced to submit, Zeus himself being powerless to avert her decrees; but in later times this conception of one inexorable, all-conquering fate became amplified by the poets into that above described, and the Fates are henceforth the special presiding deities over the life and death of mortals.

The Fates, or Moirae, are represented by the poets as stern, inexorable female divinities, aged, hideous, and also lame, which is evidently meant to indicate the slow and halting march of destiny, which they controlled. Painters and sculptors, on the other hand, depicted them as beautiful maidens of a grave but kindly aspect.

There is a charming representation of Lachesis, which depicts her in all the grace of youth and beauty. She is sitting spinning, and at her feet lie two masks, one comic, the other tragic, as though to convey the idea, that, to a divinity of fate, the brightest and saddest scenes of earthly existence are alike indifferent, and that she quietly and steadily pursues her occupation, regardless of human weal or woe.

When represented at the feet of Hades in the lower world they are clad in dark robes; but when they appear in Olympus they wear bright garments,

bespangled with stars, and are seated on radiant thrones, with crowns on their heads.

It was considered the function of the Fates to indicate to the Furies the precise torture which the wicked should undergo for their crimes.

They were regarded as prophetic divinities, and had sanctuaries in many parts of Greece.

The Fates are mentioned as assisting the Graces to conduct Persephone to the upper world at her periodical reunion with her mother Demeter. They also appear in company with Eileithyia, goddess of birth.

# Nyx and Her Progeny

**NYX, THE DAUGHTER OF CHAOS**, being the personification of Night, was, according to the poetic ideas of the Greeks, considered to be the mother of everything mysterious and inexplicable, such as death, sleep, dreams, etc. She became united to Erebus, and their children were Aether and Hemera (Air and Daylight), evidently a simile of the poets, to indicate that darkness always precedes light.

Nyx inhabited a palace in the dark regions of the lower world, and is represented as a beautiful woman, seated in a chariot, drawn by two black horses. She is clothed in dark robes, wears a long veil, and is accompanied by the stars, which follow in her train.

## Thanatos and Hypnus

**Thanatos** (Death) and his twin-brother Hypnus (Sleep) were the children of Nyx.

Their dwelling was in the realm of shades, and when they appear among mortals, Thanatos is feared and hated as the enemy of mankind, whose hard heart knows no pity, whilst his brother Hypnus is universally loved and welcomed as their kindest and most beneficent friend.

But though the ancients regarded Thanatos as a gloomy and mournful divinity, they did not represent him with any exterior repulsiveness. On the contrary, he appears as a beautiful youth, who holds in his hand an inverted torch, emblematical of the light of life being extinguished, whilst his disengaged arm is thrown lovingly round the shoulder of his brother Hypnus.

**Hypnus** is sometimes depicted standing erect with closed eyes; at others he is in a recumbent position beside his brother Thanatos, and usually bears a poppy-stalk in his hand.

A most interesting description of the abode of Hypnus is given by Ovid in his Metamorphoses. He tells us how the god of Sleep dwelt in a mountain-cave near the realm of the Cimmerians, which the sun never pierced with his rays. No sound disturbed the stillness, no song of birds, not a branch moved, and no human voice broke the profound silence which

reigned everywhere. From the lowermost rocks of the cave issued the river Lethe, and one might almost have supposed that its course was arrested, were it not for the low, monotonous hum of the water, which invited slumber. The entrance was partially hidden by numberless white and red poppies, which Mother Night had gathered and planted there, and from the juice of which she extracts drowsiness, which she scatters in liquid drops all over the earth, as soon as the sun-god has sunk to rest. In the centre of the cave stands a couch of blackest ebony, with a bed of down, over which is laid a coverlet of sable hue. Here the god himself reposes, surrounded by innumerable forms. These are idle dreams, more numerous than the sands of the sea. Chief among them is Morpheus, that changeful god, who may assume any shape or form he pleases. Nor can the god of Sleep resist his own power; for though he may rouse himself for a while, he soon succumbs to the drowsy influences which surround him.

## Morpheus

Morpheus, the son of Hypnus, was the god of Dreams.

He is always represented winged, and appears sometimes as a youth, sometimes as an old man. In his hand he bears a cluster of poppies, and as he steps with noiseless footsteps over the earth, he gently scatters the seeds of this sleep-producing plant over the eyes of weary mortals.

Homer describes the House of Dreams as having two gates: one, whence issue all deceptive and flattering visions, being formed of ivory; the other, through which proceed those dreams which are fulfilled, of horn.

# Asclepius

**ASCLEPIUS, THE GOD OF** the healing art, was the son of Apollo and the nymph Coronis. He was educated by the noble Centaur Chiron, who instructed him in all knowledge, but more especially in that of the properties of herbs. Asclepius searched out the hidden powers of plants, and discovered cures for the various diseases which afflict the human body. He brought his art to such perfection, that he not only succeeded in warding off death, but also restored the dead to life. It was popularly believed that he was materially assisted in his wonderful cures by the blood of the Medusa, given to him by Pallas-Athene.

It is well to observe that the shrines of this divinity, which were usually built in healthy places, on hills outside the town, or near wells which were believed to have healing powers, offered at the same time means of cure for the sick and suffering, thus combining religious with sanitary influences. It was the custom for the sufferer to sleep in the temple, when, if he had been earnest in his devotions, Asclepius appeared to him in a dream, and revealed the means to be employed for the cure of his malady. On the walls of these temples were hung tablets, inscribed by the different pilgrims with the particulars of their maladies, the remedies practised, and the cures worked by the god: a custom undoubtedly productive of most beneficial results.

Groves, temples, and altars were dedicated to Asclepius in many parts of Greece, but Epidaurus, the chief seat of his worship – where, indeed, it is said to have originated – contained his principal temple, which served at the same time as a hospital.

The statue of Asclepius in the temple at Epidaurus was formed of ivory and gold, and represented him as an old man with a full beard, leaning on a staff round which a serpent is climbing. The serpent was the distinguishing symbol of this divinity, partly because these reptiles were greatly used by the ancients in the cure of diseases, and partly also because all the prudence and wisdom of the serpent were deemed indispensable to the judicious physician.

His usual attributes are a staff, a bowl, a bunch of herbs, a pineapple, a dog, and a serpent.

His children inherited, for the most part, the distinguished talents of their father. Two of his sons, Machaon and Podalirius, accompanied Agamemnon to the Trojan war, in which expedition they became renowned, not only as military heroes, but also as skilful physicians.

Their sisters, Hygeia (health), and Panacea (all-healing), had temples dedicated to them, and received divine honours. The function of Hygeia was to maintain the health of the community, which great blessing was supposed to be brought by her as a direct and beneficent gift from the gods.

# Sea Divinities

**THE EARLY GREEKS**, with their extraordinary power of personifying all and every attribute of Nature, gave a distinct personality to the mighty wonders of the deep.

## Oceanus

Oceanus was the son of Uranus and Gaea. He was the personification of the ever-flowing stream, which, according to the primitive notions of the early Greeks, encircled the world, and from which sprang all the rivers and streams that watered the earth. He was married to Tethys, one of the Titans, and was the father of a numerous progeny called the Oceanides, who are said to have been three thousand in number. He alone, of all the Titans, refrained from taking part against Zeus in the Titanomachia, and was, on that account, the only one of the primeval divinities permitted to retain his dominion under the new dynasty.

## Nereus

Nereus appears to have been the personification of the sea in its calm and placid moods, and was, after Poseidon, the most important of the sea-deities. He is represented as a kind and benevolent old man, possessing the gift of prophecy, and presiding more particularly over the Aegean Sea, of which he was considered to be the protecting spirit. There he dwelt with his wife Doris and their fifty blooming daughters, the Nereides, beneath the waves in a beautiful grotto-palace, and was ever ready to assist distressed mariners in the hour of danger.

## Proteus

Proteus, more familiarly known as ‘The Old Man of the Sea,’ was a son of Poseidon, and gifted with prophetic power. But he had an invincible objection to being consulted in his capacity as seer, and those who wished him to foretell events, watched for the hour of noon, when he was in the habit of coming up to the island of Pharos, with Poseidon’s flock of seals, which he tended at the bottom of the sea. Surrounded by these creatures of the deep, he used to slumber beneath the grateful shade of the rocks. This

was the favourable moment to seize the prophet, who, in order to avoid importunities, would change himself into an infinite variety of forms. But patience gained the day; for if he were only held long enough, he became wearied at last, and, resuming his true form, gave the information desired, after which he dived down again to the bottom of the sea, accompanied by the animals he tended.

## Triton and the Tritons

Triton was the only son of Poseidon and Amphitrite, but he possessed little influence, being altogether a minor divinity. He is usually represented as preceding his father and acting as his trumpeter, using a conch-shell for this purpose. He lived with his parents in their beautiful golden palace beneath the sea at Aegea, and his favourite pastime was to ride over the billows on horses or sea-monsters. Triton is always represented as half man, half fish, the body below the waist terminating in the tail of a dolphin. We frequently find mention of Tritons who are either the offspring or kindred of Triton.

## Glaucus

Glaucus is said to have become a sea-divinity in the following manner. While angling one day, he observed that the fish he caught and threw on the bank, at once nibbled at the grass and then leaped back into the water. His curiosity was naturally excited, and he proceeded to gratify it by taking up a few blades and tasting them. No sooner was this done than, obeying an irresistible impulse, he precipitated himself into the deep, and became a sea-god.

Like most sea-divinities he was gifted with prophetic power, and each year visited all the islands and coasts with a train of marine monsters, foretelling all kinds of evil. Hence fishermen dreaded his approach, and endeavoured, by prayer and fasting, to avert the misfortunes which he prophesied. He is often represented floating on the billows, his body covered with mussels, sea-weed, and shells, wearing a full beard and long flowing hair, and bitterly bewailing his immortality.

## Thetis

The silver-footed, fair-haired Thetis, who plays an important part in the mythology of Greece, was the daughter of Nereus, or, as some assert, of

Poseidon. Her grace and beauty were so remarkable that Zeus and Poseidon both sought an alliance with her; but, as it had been foretold that a son of hers would gain supremacy over his father, they relinquished their intentions, and she became the wife of Peleus, son of Aeacus. Like Proteus, Thetis possessed the power of transforming herself into a variety of different shapes, and when wooed by Peleus she exerted this power in order to elude him. But, knowing that persistence would eventually succeed, he held her fast until she assumed her true form. Their nuptials were celebrated with the utmost pomp and magnificence, and were honoured by the presence of all the gods and goddesses, with the exception of Eris. How the goddess of discord resented her exclusion from the marriage festivities has already been shown.

Thetis ever retained great influence over the mighty lord of heaven, which, as we shall see hereafter, she used in favour of her renowned son, Achilles, in the Trojan War.

When Halcyone plunged into the sea in despair after the shipwreck and death of her husband King Ceyx, Thetis transformed both husband and wife into the birds called kingfishers (halcyones), which, with the tender affection which characterized the unfortunate couple, always fly in pairs. The idea of the ancients was that these birds brought forth their young in nests, which float on the surface of the sea in calm weather, before and after the shortest day, when Thetis was said to keep the waters smooth and tranquil for their especial benefit; hence the term ‘halcyon-days,’ which signifies a period of rest and untroubled felicity.

## Thaumas, Phorcys and Ceto

Among these personifications of the sea we also find Thaumas, Phorcys, and their sister Ceto, who were the offspring of Pontus.

**Thaumas** (whose name signifies Wonder) typifies that peculiar, translucent condition of the surface of the sea when it reflects, mirror-like, various images, and appears to hold in its transparent embrace the flaming stars and illuminated cities, which are so frequently reflected on its glassy bosom.

Thaumas married the lovely Electra (whose name signifies the sparkling light produced by electricity), daughter of Oceanus. Her amber-coloured hair was of such rare beauty that none of her fair-haired sisters could

compare with her, and when she wept, her tears, being too precious to be lost, formed drops of shining amber.

**Phorcys** and **Ceto** personified more especially the hidden perils and terrors of the ocean. They were the parents of the Gorgons, the Graea, and the Dragon which guarded the golden apples of the Hesperides.

## The Sirens

The Sirens would appear to have been personifications of those numerous rocks and unseen dangers, which abound on the S.W. coast of Italy. They were sea-nymphs, with the upper part of the body that of a maiden and the lower that of a sea-bird, having wings attached to their shoulders, and were endowed with such wonderful voices, that their sweet songs are said to have lured mariners to destruction.

# Pan

**PAN WAS THE GOD** of fertility, and the special patron of shepherds and huntsmen; he presided over all rural occupations, was chief of the Satyrs, and head of all rural divinities.

According to the common belief, he was the son of Hermes and a wood nymph, and came into the world with horns sprouting from his forehead, a goat's beard and a crooked nose, pointed ears, and the tail and feet of a goat, and presented altogether so repulsive an appearance that, at the sight of him, his mother fled in dismay.

Hermes, however, took up his curious little offspring, wrapped him in a hare skin, and carried him in his arms to Olympus. The grotesque form and merry antics of the little stranger made him a great favourite with all the immortals, especially Dionysus; and they bestowed upon him the name of Pan (all), because he had delighted them *all*.

His favourite haunts were grottoes, and his delight was to wander in uncontrolled freedom over rocks and mountains, following his various pursuits, ever cheerful, and usually very noisy. He was a great lover of music, singing, dancing, and all pursuits which enhance the pleasures of life; and hence, in spite of his repulsive appearance, we see him surrounded with nymphs of the forests and dales, who love to dance round him to the cheerful music of his pipe, the syrinx. The myth concerning the origin of Pan's pipe is as follows: Pan became enamoured of a beautiful nymph, called Syrinx, who, appalled at his terrible appearance, fled from the pertinacious attentions of her unwelcome suitor. He pursued her to the banks of the river Ladon, when, seeing his near approach, and feeling escape impossible, she called on the gods for assistance, who, in answer to her prayer, transformed her into a reed, just as Pan was about to seize her. Whilst the love-sick Pan was sighing and lamenting his unfortunate fate, the winds gently swayed the reeds, and produced a murmuring sound as of one complaining. Charmed with the soothing tones, he endeavoured to reproduce them himself, and after cutting seven of the reeds of unequal

length, he joined them together, and succeeded in producing the pipe, which he called the syrinx, in memory of his lost love.

Pan was regarded by shepherds as their most valiant protector, who defended their flocks from the attacks of wolves. The shepherds of these early times, having no penfolds, were in the habit of gathering together their flocks in mountain caves, to protect them against the inclemency of the weather, and also to secure them at night against the attacks of wild animals; these caves, therefore, which were very numerous in the mountain districts of Arcadia, Boeotia, etc., were all consecrated to Pan.

As it is customary in all tropical climates to repose during the heat of the day, Pan is represented as greatly enjoying his afternoon sleep in the cool shelter of a tree or cave, and also as being highly displeased at any sound which disturbed his slumbers, for which reason the shepherds were always particularly careful to keep unbroken silence during these hours, whilst they themselves indulged in a quiet siesta.

Pan was equally beloved by huntsmen, being himself a great lover of the woods, which afforded to his cheerful and active disposition full scope, and in which he loved to range at will. He was regarded as the patron of the chase, and the rural sportsmen, returning from an unsuccessful day's sport, beat, in token of their displeasure, the wooden image of Pan, which always occupied a prominent place in their dwellings.

All sudden and unaccountable sounds which startle travellers in lonely spots, were attributed to Pan, who possessed a frightful and most discordant voice; hence the term *pan*ic, to indicate sudden fear. The Athenians ascribed their victory at Marathon to the alarm which he created among the Persians by his terrible voice.

Pan was gifted with the power of prophecy, which he is said to have imparted to Apollo, and he possessed a well-known and very ancient oracle in Arcadia, in which state he was more especially worshipped.

The artists of later times have somewhat toned down the original very unattractive conception of Pan, as above described, and merely represent him as a young man, hardened by the exposure to all weathers which a rural life involves, and bearing in his hand the shepherd's crook and syrinx – these being his usual attributes – whilst small horns project from his forehead. He is either undraped, or wears merely the light cloak called the chlamys.

The usual offerings to Pan were milk and honey in shepherds' bowls. Cows, lambs, and rams were also sacrificed to him.

After the introduction of Pan into the worship of Dionysus, we hear of a number of little Pans (Panisci), who are sometimes confounded with the Satyrs.

## The Satyrs

The Satyrs were a race of woodland spirits, who evidently personified the free, wild, and untrammelled life of the forest. Their appearance was both grotesque and repulsive; they had flat broad noses, pointed ears, and little horns sprouting from their foreheads, a rough shaggy skin, and small goat's tails. They led a life of pleasure and self-indulgence, followed the chase, revelled in every description of wild music and dancing, were terrible wine-bibbers, and addicted to the deep slumbers which follow heavy potations. They were no less dreaded by mortals than by the gentle woodland nymphs, who always avoided their coarse rough sports.

The Satyrs were conspicuous figures in the train of Dionysus, and Silenus their chief was tutor to the wine god. The older Satyrs were called Silens, and are represented in antique sculpture, as more nearly approaching the human form.

In addition to the ordinary Satyrs, artists delighted in depicting little Satyrs, young imps, frolicking about the woods in a marvellous variety of droll attitudes. These little fellows greatly resemble their friends and companions, the Panisci.

In rural districts it was customary for the shepherds and peasants who attended the festivals of Dionysus, to dress themselves in the skins of goats and other animals, and, under this disguise, they permitted themselves all kinds of playful tricks and excesses, to which circumstance the conception of the Satyrs is by some authorities attributed.

# The Nymphs

**THE GRACEFUL BEINGS** called the Nymphs were the presiding deities of the woods, grottoes, streams, meadows, etc.

These divinities were supposed to be beautiful maidens of fairy-like form, and robed in more or less shadowy garments. They were held in the greatest veneration, though, being minor divinities, they had no temples dedicated to them, but were worshipped in caves or grottoes, with libations of milk, honey, oil, etc.

They may be divided into three distinct classes, namely, water, mountain, and tree or wood nymphs.

## Water Nymphs

The worship of water-deities is common to most primitive nations. The streams, springs, and fountains of a country bear the same relation to it which the blood, coursing through the numberless arteries of a human being, bears to the body; both represent the living, moving, life-awakening element, without which existence would be impossible. Hence we find among most nations a deep feeling of attachment to the streams and waters of their native land, the remembrance of which, when absent in foreign climes, is always treasured with peculiar fondness. Thus among the early Greeks, each tribe came to regard the rivers and springs of its individual state as beneficent powers, which brought blessing and prosperity to the country. It is probable also that the charm which ever accompanies the sound of running water exercised its power over their imagination. They heard with delight the gentle whisper of the fountain, lulling the senses with its low, rippling tones; the soft purling of the brook as it rushes over the pebbles, or the mighty voice of the waterfall as it dashes on in its headlong course; and the beings which they pictured to themselves as presiding over all these charming sights and sounds of nature, corresponded, in their graceful appearance, with the scenes with which they were associated.

The **Oceanides**, or Ocean Nymphs, were the daughters of Oceanus and Tethys, and, like most sea divinities, were endowed with the gift of

prophecy.

They are personifications of those delicate vapour-like exhalations, which, in warm climates, are emitted from the surface of the sea, more especially at sunset, and are impelled forwards by the evening breeze. They are accordingly represented as misty, shadowy beings, with graceful swaying forms, and robed in pale blue, gauze-like fabrics.

The **Nereides** were the daughters of Nereus and Doris, and were nymphs of the Mediterranean Sea.

They are similar in appearance to the Oceanides, but their beauty is of a less shadowy order, and is more like that of mortals. They wear a flowing, pale green robe; their liquid eyes resemble, in their clear depths, the lucid waters of the sea they inhabit; their hair floats carelessly over their shoulders, and assumes the greenish tint of the water itself, which, far from deteriorating from their beauty, greatly adds to its effect. The Nereides either accompany the chariot of the mighty ruler of the sea, or follow in his train.

We are told by the poets that the lonely mariner watches the Nereides with silent awe and wondering delight, as they rise from their grotto-palaces in the deep, and dance, in joyful groups, over the sleeping waves. Some, with arms entwined, follow with their movements the melodies which seem to hover over the sea, whilst others scatter liquid gems around, these being emblematical of the phosphorescent light, so frequently observed at night by the traveller in southern waters.

The best known of the Nereides were Thetis, the wife of Peleus, Amphitrite, the spouse of Poseidon, and Galatea, the beloved of Acis.

**The Naiades** were the nymphs of fresh-water springs, lakes, brooks, rivers, etc.

As the trees, plants, and flowers owed their nourishment to their genial, fostering care, these divinities were regarded by the Greeks as special benefactors to mankind. Like all the nymphs, they possessed the gift of prophecy, for which reason many of the springs and fountains over which they presided were believed to inspire mortals who drank of their waters with the power of foretelling future events. The Naiades are intimately connected in idea with those flowers which are called after them Nymphae, or water-lilies, whose broad, green leaves and yellow cups float

upon the surface of the water, as though proudly conscious of their own grace and beauty.

We often hear of the Naiades forming alliances with mortals, and also of their being wooed by the sylvan deities of the woods and dales.

## Dryades, or Tree Nymphs

The tree nymphs partook of the distinguishing characteristics of the particular tree to whose life they were wedded, and were known collectively by the name of the Dryades.

The **Hamadryades**, or oak nymphs, represent in their peculiar individuality the quiet, self-reliant power which appears to belong essentially to the grand and lordly king of the forest.

The **Birch Nymph** is a melancholy maiden with floating hair, resembling the branches of the pale and fragile-looking tree which she inhabits.

The **Beech Nymph** is strong and sturdy, full of life and joyousness, and appears to give promise of faithful love and undisturbed repose, whilst her rosy cheeks, deep brown eyes, and graceful form bespeak health, vigour, and vitality.

The **nymph of the Linden Tree** is represented as a little coy maiden, whose short silver-grey dress reaches a little below the knee, and displays to advantage her delicately formed limbs. The sweet face, which is partly averted, reveals a pair of large blue eyes, which appear to look at you with wondering surprise and shy mistrust; her pale, golden hair is bound by the faintest streak of rose-coloured ribbon.

The tree nymph, being wedded to the life of the tree she inhabited, ceased to exist when it was either felled, or so injured as to wither away and die.

## Nymphs of the Valleys and Mountains

The **Napaeae** were the kind and gentle nymphs of the valleys and glens who appear in the train of Artemis. They are represented as lovely maidens with short tunics, which, reaching only to the knee, do not impede their swift and graceful movements in the exercise of the chase. Their pale brown tresses are fastened in a knot at the back of the head, whence a few stray curls escape over their shoulders. The Napaeae are shy as the fawns, and quite as frolicsome.

The **Oreades**, or mountain nymphs, who are the principal and constant companions of Artemis, are tall, graceful maidens, attired as huntresses. They are ardent followers of the chase, and spare neither the gentle deer nor the timid hare, nor indeed any animal they meet with in their rapid course. Wherever their wild hunt goes the shy Napaeae are represented as hiding behind the leaves, whilst their favourites, the fawns, kneel tremblingly beside them, looking up beseechingly for protection from the wild huntresses; and even the bold Satyrs dart away at their approach, and seek safety in flight.

The **Limoniades**, or meadow nymphs, resemble the Naiades, and are usually represented dancing hand in hand in a circle.

The **Hyades**, who in appearance are somewhat similar to the Oceanides, are cloudy divinities, and, from the fact of their being invariably accompanied by rain, are represented as incessantly weeping.

The **Meliades** were the nymphs who presided over fruit-trees.

Before concluding this subject, attention should be drawn to the fact that, in more modern times, this beautiful idea of animating all nature in detail reappears under the various local traditions extant in different countries. Thus do the Oceanides and Nereides live again in the mermaids, whose existence is still believed in by mariners, whilst the flower and meadow nymphs assume the shape of those tiny elves and fairies, who were formerly believed to hold their midnight revels in every wood and on every common; indeed, even at the present day, the Irish peasantry, especially in the west, firmly believe in the existence of the fairies, or ‘good people,’ as they are called.

# PERSEUS THE GORGON-SLAYER

## Introduction

**PERSEUS**, one of the most renowned of the legendary heroes of antiquity, was the son of Zeus and Danae, who was the daughter of Acrisius, king of Argos. At the start of Perseus' life Acrisius discarded him into the sea with his mother as he had received a prophecy that his grandson would kill him. The most famous tale of Perseus involves him beheading the Gorgon Medusa, who could turn people to stone with just a look. On his journey back Perseus also saves Andromeda from a sea monster. He later becomes the founder of Mycenae and creates a great dynasty. This chapter tells the story of Perseus and the perils and triumphs he faced.

# How Perseus and His Mother Came to Seriphos

**ONCE UPON A TIME** there were two princes who were twins. Their names were Acrisius and Proetus, and they lived in the pleasant vale of Argos, far away in Hellas. They had fruitful meadows and vineyards, sheep and oxen, great herds of horses feeding down in Lerna Fen, and all that men could need to make them blest: and yet they were wretched, because they were jealous of each other. From the moment they were born they began to quarrel; and when they grew up each tried to take away the other's share of the kingdom, and keep all for himself. So first Acrisius drove out Proetus; and he went across the seas, and brought home a foreign princess for his wife, and foreign warriors to help him, who were called Cyclopes; and drove out Acrisius in his turn; and then they fought a long while up and down the land, till the quarrel was settled, and Acrisius took Argos and one half the land, and Proetus took Tiryns and the other half. And Proetus and his Cyclopes built around Tiryns great walls of unhewn stone, which are standing to this day.

But there came a prophet to that hard-hearted Acrisius and prophesied against him, and said, "Because you have risen up against your own blood, your own blood shall rise up against you; because you have sinned against your kindred, by your kindred you shall be punished. Your daughter Danae shall bear a son, and by that son's hands you shall die. So the Gods have ordained, and it will surely come to pass."

And at that Acrisius was very much afraid; but he did not mend his ways. He had been cruel to his own family, and, instead of repenting and being kind to them, he went on to be more cruel than ever: for he shut up his fair daughter Danae in a cavern underground, lined with brass, that no one might come near her. So he fancied himself more cunning than the Gods: but you will see presently whether he was able to escape them.

Now it came to pass that in time Danae bore a son; so beautiful a babe that any but King Acrisius would have had pity on it. But he had no pity; for he took Danae and her babe down to the seashore, and put them into a

great chest and thrust them out to sea, for the winds and the waves to carry them whithersoever they would.

The north-west wind blew freshly out of the blue mountains, and down the pleasant vale of Argos, and away and out to sea. And away and out to sea before it floated the mother and her babe, while all who watched them wept, save that cruel father, King Acrisius.

So they floated on and on, and the chest danced up and down upon the billows, and the baby slept upon its mother's breast: but the poor mother could not sleep, but watched and wept, and she sang to her baby as they floated; and the song which she sang you shall learn yourselves some day.

And now they are past the last blue headland, and in the open sea; and there is nothing round them but the waves, and the sky, and the wind. But the waves are gentle, and the sky is clear, and the breeze is tender and low; for these are the days when Halcyone and Ceyx build their nests, and no storms ever ruffle the pleasant summer sea.

And who were Halcyone and Ceyx? You shall hear while the chest floats on. Halcyone was a fairy maiden, the daughter of the beach and of the wind. And she loved a sailor-boy, and married him; and none on earth were so happy as they. But at last Ceyx was wrecked; and before he could swim to the shore the billows swallowed him up. And Halcyone saw him drowning, and leapt into the sea to him; but in vain. Then the Immortals took pity on them both, and changed them into two fair sea-birds; and now they build a floating nest every year, and sail up and down happily for ever upon the pleasant seas of Greece.

So a night passed, and a day, and a long day it was for Danae; and another night and day beside, till Danae was faint with hunger and weeping, and yet no land appeared. And all the while the babe slept quietly; and at last poor Danae drooped her head and fell asleep likewise with her cheek against the babe's.

After a while she was awakened suddenly; for the chest was jarring and grinding, and the air was full of sound. She looked up, and over her head were mighty cliffs, all red in the setting sun, and around her rocks and breakers, and flying flakes of foam. She clasped her hands together, and shrieked aloud for help. And when she cried, help met her: for now there came over the rocks a tall and stately man, and looked down wondering upon poor Danae tossing about in the chest among the waves.

He wore a rough cloak of frieze, and on his head a broad hat to shade his face; in his hand he carried a trident for spearing fish, and over his shoulder was a casting-net; but Danae could see that he was no common man by his stature, and his walk, and his flowing golden hair and beard; and by the two servants who came behind him, carrying baskets for his fish. But she had hardly time to look at him, before he had laid aside his trident and leapt down the rocks, and thrown his casting-net so surely over Danae and the chest, that he drew it, and her, and the baby, safe upon a ledge of rock.

Then the fisherman took Danae by the hand, and lifted her out of the chest, and said:

"O beautiful damsel, what strange chance has brought you to this island in so flail a ship? Who are you, and whence? Surely you are some king's daughter; and this boy has somewhat more than mortal."

And as he spoke he pointed to the babe; for its face shone like the morning star.

But Danae only held down her head, and sobbed out –

"Tell me to what land I have come, unhappy that I am; and among what men I have fallen!"

And he said, "This isle is called Seriphos, and I am a Hellen, and dwell in it. I am the brother of Polydectes the king; and men call me Dictys the netter, because I catch the fish of the shore."

Then Danae fell down at his feet, and embraced his knees, and cried:

"Oh, sir, have pity upon a stranger, whom a cruel doom has driven to your land; and let me live in your house as a servant; but treat me honourably, for I was once a king's daughter, and this my boy (as you have truly said) is of no common race. I will not be a charge to you, or eat the bread of idleness; for I am more skilful in weaving and embroidery than all the maidens of my land."

And she was going on; but Dictys stopped her, and raised her up, and said:

"My daughter, I am old, and my hairs are growing grey; while I have no children to make my home cheerful. Come with me then, and you shall be a daughter to me and to my wife, and this babe shall be our grandchild. For I fear the Gods, and show hospitality to all strangers; knowing that good deeds, like evil ones, always return to those who do them."

So Danae was comforted, and went home with Dictys the good fisherman, and was a daughter to him and to his wife, till fifteen years were past.

# How Perseus Vowed a Rash Vow

**FIFTEEN YEARS** were past and gone, and the babe was now grown to be a tall lad and a sailor, and went many voyages after merchandise to the islands round. His mother called him Perseus; but all the people in Seriphos said that he was not the son of mortal man, and called him the son of Zeus, the king of the Immortals. For though he was but fifteen, he was taller by a head than any man in the island; and he was the most skilful of all in running and wrestling and boxing, and in throwing the quoit and the javelin, and in rowing with the oar, and in playing on the harp, and in all which befits a man. And he was brave and truthful, gentle and courteous, for good old Dictys had trained him well; and well it was for Perseus that he had done so. For now Danae and her son fell into great danger, and Perseus had need of all his wit to defend his mother and himself.

I said that Dictys' brother was Polydectes, king of the island. He was not a righteous man, like Dictys; but greedy, and cunning, and cruel. And when he saw fair Danae, he wanted to marry her. But she would not; for she did not love him, and cared for no one but her boy, and her boy's father, whom she never hoped to see again. At last Polydectes became furious; and while Perseus was away at sea he took poor Danae away from Dictys, saying, "If you will not be my wife, you shall be my slave."

So Danae was made a slave, and had to fetch water from the well, and grind in the mill, and perhaps was beaten, and wore a heavy chain, because she would not marry that cruel king. But Perseus was far away over the seas in the isle of Samos, little thinking how his mother was languishing in grief.

Now one day at Samos, while the ship was lading, Perseus wandered into a pleasant wood to get out of the sun, and sat down on the turf and fell asleep. And as he slept a strange dream came to him – the strangest dream which he had ever had in his life.

There came a lady to him through the wood, taller than he, or any mortal man; but beautiful exceedingly, with great grey eyes, clear and piercing,

but strangely soft and mild. On her head was a helmet, and in her hand a spear. And over her shoulder, above her long blue robes, hung a goat-skin, which bore up a mighty shield of brass, polished like a mirror. She stood and looked at him with her clear grey eyes; and Perseus saw that her eye-lids never moved, nor her eyeballs, but looked straight through and through him, and into his very heart, as if she could see all the secrets of his soul, and knew all that he had ever thought or longed for since the day that he was born. And Perseus dropped his eyes, trembling and blushing, as the wonderful lady spoke.

"Perseus, you must do an errand for me."

"Who are you, lady? And how do you know my name?"

"I am Pallas-Athene; and I know the thoughts of all men's hearts, and discern their manhood or their baseness. And from the souls of clay I turn away, and they are blest, but not by me. They fatten at ease, like sheep in the pasture, and eat what they did not sow, like oxen in the stall. They grow and spread, like the gourd along the ground; but, like the gourd, they give no shade to the traveller, and when they are ripe death gathers them, and they go down unloved into hell, and their name vanishes out of the land.

"But to the souls of fire I give more fire, and to those who are manful I give a might more than man's. These are the heroes, the sons of the Immortals, who are blest, but not like the souls of clay. For I drive them forth by strange paths, Perseus, that they may fight the Titans and the monsters, the enemies of Gods and men. Through doubt and need, danger and battle, I drive them; and some of them are slain in the flower of youth, no man knows when or where; and some of them win noble names, and a fair and green old age; but what will be their latter end I know not, and none, save Zeus, the father of Gods and men. Tell me now, Perseus, which of these two sorts of men seem to you more blest?"

Then Perseus answered boldly: "Better to die in the flower of youth, on the chance of winning a noble name, than to live at ease like the sheep, and die unloved and unrenowned."

Then that strange lady laughed, and held up her brazen shield, and cried: "See here, Perseus; dare you face such a monster as this, and slay it, that I may place its head upon this shield?"

And in the mirror of the shield there appeared a face, and as Perseus looked on it his blood ran cold. It was the face of a beautiful woman; but her cheeks were pale as death, and her brows were knit with everlasting pain, and her lips were thin and bitter like a snake's; and instead of hair, vipers wreathed about her temples, and shot out their forked tongues; while round her head were folded wings like an eagle's, and upon her bosom claws of brass.

And Perseus looked awhile, and then said: "If there is anything so fierce and foul on earth, it were a noble deed to kill it. Where can I find the monster?"

Then the strange lady smiled again, and said: "Not yet; you are too young, and too unskilled; for this is Medusa the Gorgon, the mother of a monstrous brood. Return to your home, and do the work which waits there for you. You must play the man in that before I can think you worthy to go in search of the Gorgon."

Then Perseus would have spoken, but the strange lady vanished, and he awoke; and behold, it was a dream. But day and night Perseus saw before him the face of that dreadful woman, with the vipers writhing round her head.

So he returned home; and when he came to Seriphos, the first thing which he heard was that his mother was a slave in the house of Polydectes.

Grinding his teeth with rage, he went out, and away to the king's palace, and through the men's rooms, and the women's rooms, and so through all the house (for no one dared stop him, so terrible and fair was he), till he found his mother sitting on the floor, turning the stone hand-mill, and weeping as she turned it. And he lifted her up, and kissed her, and bade her follow him forth. But before they could pass out of the room Polydectes came in, raging. And when Perseus saw him, he flew upon him as the mastiff flies on the boar.

"Villain and tyrant!" he cried; "Is this your respect for the Gods, and thy mercy to strangers and widows? You shall die!" And because he had no sword he caught up the stone hand-mill, and lifted it to dash out Polydectes' brains.

But his mother clung to him, shrieking, "Oh, my son, we are strangers and helpless in the land; and if you kill the king, all the people will fall on us, and we shall both die."

Good Dictys, too, who had come in, entreated him. “Remember that he is my brother. Remember how I have brought you up, and trained you as my own son, and spare him for my sake.”

Then Perseus lowered his hand; and Polydectes, who had been trembling all this while like a coward, because he knew that he was in the wrong, let Perseus and his mother pass.

Perseus took his mother to the temple of Athene, and there the priestess made her one of the temple-sweepers; for there they knew she would be safe, and not even Polydectes would dare to drag her away from the altar. And there Perseus, and the good Dictys, and his wife, came to visit her every day; while Polydectes, not being able to get what he wanted by force, cast about in his wicked heart how he might get it by cunning.

Now he was sure that he could never get back Danae as long as Perseus was in the island; so he made a plot to rid himself of him. And first he pretended to have forgiven Perseus, and to have forgotten Danae; so that, for a while, all went as smoothly as ever.

Next he proclaimed a great feast, and invited to it all the chiefs, and landowners, and the young men of the island, and among them Perseus, that they might all do him homage as their king, and eat of his banquet in his hall.

On the appointed day they all came; and as the custom was then, each guest brought his present with him to the king: one a horse, another a shawl, or a ring, or a sword; and those who had nothing better brought a basket of grapes, or of game; but Perseus brought nothing, for he had nothing to bring, being but a poor sailor-lad.

He was ashamed, however, to go into the king’s presence without his gift; and he was too proud to ask Dictys to lend him one. So he stood at the door sorrowfully, watching the rich men go in; and his face grew very red as they pointed at him, and smiled, and whispered, “What has that foundling to give?”

Now this was what Polydectes wanted; and as soon as he heard that Perseus stood without, he bade them bring him in, and asked him scornfully before them all, “Am I not your king, Perseus, and have I not invited you to my feast? Where is your present, then?”

Perseus blushed and stammered, while all the proud men round laughed, and some of them began jeering him openly. “This fellow was thrown

ashore here like a piece of weed or drift-wood, and yet he is too proud to bring a gift to the king."

"And though he does not know who his father is, he is vain enough to let the old women call him the son of Zeus."

And so forth, till poor Perseus grew mad with shame, and hardly knowing what he said, cried out – "A present! Who are you who talk of presents? See if I do not bring a nobler one than all of yours together!"

So he said boasting; and yet he felt in his heart that he was braver than all those scoffers, and more able to do some glorious deed.

"Hear him! Hear the boaster! What is it to be?" cried they all, laughing louder than ever.

Then his dream at Samos came into his mind, and he cried aloud, "The head of the Gorgon."

He was half afraid after he had said the words for all laughed louder than ever, and Polydectes loudest of all.

"You have promised to bring me the Gorgon's head? Then never appear again in this island without it. Go!"

Perseus ground his teeth with rage, for he saw that he had fallen into a trap; but his promise lay upon him, and he went out without a word.

Down to the cliffs he went, and looked across the broad blue sea; and he wondered if his dream were true, and prayed in the bitterness of his soul.

"Pallas-Athene, was my dream true? And shall I slay the Gorgon? If thou didst really show me her face, let me not come to shame as a liar and boastful. Rashly and angrily I promised; but cunningly and patiently will I perform."

But there was no answer, nor sign; neither thunder nor any appearance; not even a cloud in the sky.

And three times Perseus called weeping, "Rashly and angrily I promised; but cunningly and patiently will I perform."

Then he saw afar off above the sea a small white cloud, as bright as silver. And it came on, nearer and nearer, till its brightness dazzled his eyes.

Perseus wondered at that strange cloud, for there was no other cloud all round the sky; and he trembled as it touched the cliff below. And as it touched, it broke, and parted, and within it appeared Pallas-Athene, as he had seen her at Samos in his dream, and beside her a young man more

light-limbed than the stag, whose eyes were like sparks of fire. By his side was a scimitar of diamond, all of one clear precious stone, and on his feet were golden sandals, from the heels of which grew living wings.

They looked upon Perseus keenly, and yet they never moved their eyes; and they came up the cliffs towards him more swiftly than the sea-gull, and yet they never moved their feet, nor did the breeze stir the robes about their limbs; only the wings of the youth's sandals quivered, like a hawk's when he hangs above the cliff. And Perseus fell down and worshipped, for he knew that they were more than man.

But Athene stood before him and spoke gently, and bid him have no fear. Then:

"Perseus," she said, "he who overcomes in one trial merits thereby a sharper trial still. You have braved Polydectes, and done manfully. Dare you brave Medusa the Gorgon?"

And Perseus said, "Try me; for since you spoke to me in Samos a new soul has come into my breast, and I should be ashamed not to dare anything which I can do. Show me, then, how I can do this!"

"Perseus," said Athene, "think well before you attempt; for this deed requires a seven years' journey, in which you cannot repent or turn back nor escape; but if your heart fails you, you must die in the Unshapen Land, where no man will ever find your bones."

"Better so than live here, useless and despised," said Perseus. "Tell me, then, oh tell me, fair and wise Goddess, of your great kindness and condescension, how I can do but this one thing, and then, if need be, die!"

Then Athene smiled and said:

"Be patient, and listen; for if you forget my words, you will indeed die. You must go northward to the country of the Hyperboreans, who live beyond the pole, at the sources of the cold north wind, till you find the three Grey Sisters, who have but one eye and one tooth between them. You must ask them the way to the Nymphs, the daughters of the Evening Star, who dance about the golden tree, in the Atlantic island of the west. They will tell you the way to the Gorgon, that you may slay her, my enemy, the mother of monstrous beasts. Once she was a maiden as beautiful as morn, till in her pride she sinned a sin at which the sun hid his face; and from that day her hair was turned to vipers, and her hands to eagle's claws; and her heart was filled with shame and rage, and her lips with bitter venom;

and her eyes became so terrible that whosoever looks on them is turned to stone; and her children are the winged horse and the giant of the golden sword; and her grandchildren are Echidna the witch-adder, and Geryon the three-headed tyrant, who feeds his herds beside the herds of hell. So she became the sister of the Gorgons, Stheino and Euryte the abhorred, the daughters of the Queen of the Sea. Touch them not, for they are immortal; but bring me only Medusa's head."

"And I will bring it!" said Perseus; "But how am I to escape her eyes? Will she not freeze me too into stone?"

"You shall take this polished shield," said Athene, "and when you come near her look not at her herself, but at her image in the brass; so you may strike her safely. And when you have struck off her head, wrap it, with your face turned away, in the folds of the goat-skin on which the shield hangs, the hide of Amaltheié, the nurse of the Aegis-holder. So you will bring it safely back to me, and win to yourself renown, and a place among the heroes who feast with the Immortals upon the peak where no winds blow."

Then Perseus said, "I will go, though I die in going. But how shall I cross the seas without a ship? And who will show me my way? And when I find her, how shall I slay her, if her scales be iron and brass?"

Then the young man spoke: "These sandals of mine will bear you across the seas, and over hill and dale like a bird, as they bear me all day long; for I am Hermes, the far-famed Argus-slayer, the messenger of the Immortals who dwell on Olympus."

Then Perseus fell down and worshipped, while the young man spoke again:

"The sandals themselves will guide you on the road, for they are divine and cannot stray; and this sword itself, the Argus-slayer, will kill her, for it is divine, and needs no second stroke. Arise, and gird them on, and go forth."

So Perseus arose, and girded on the sandals and the sword.

And Athene cried, "Now leap from the cliff and be gone."

But Perseus lingered.

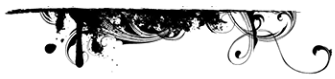
"May I not bid farewell to my mother and to Dictys? And may I not offer burnt-offerings to you, and to Hermes the far-famed Argus-slayer, and to Father Zeus above?"

“You shall not bid farewell to your mother, lest your heart relent at her weeping. I will comfort her and Dictys until you return in peace. Nor shall you offer burnt-offerings to the Olympians; for your offering shall be Medusa’s head. Leap, and trust in the armour of the Immortals.”

Then Perseus looked down the cliff and shuddered; but he was ashamed to show his dread. Then he thought of Medusa and the renown before him, and he leaped into the empty air.

And behold, instead of falling he floated, and stood, and ran along the sky. He looked back, but Athene had vanished, and Hermes; and the sandals led him on northward ever, like a crane who follows the spring toward the Ister fens.

# How Perseus Slew the Gorgon



**SO PERSEUS STARTED** on his journey, going dry-shod over land and sea; and his heart was high and joyful, for the winged sandals bore him each day a seven days' journey.

And he went by Cythnus, and by Ceos, and the pleasant Cyclades to Attica; and past Athens and Thebes, and the Copaic lake, and up the vale of Cephissus, and past the peaks of Oeta and Pindus, and over the rich Thessalian plains, till the sunny hills of Greece were behind him, and before him were the wilds of the north. Then he passed the Thracian mountains, and many a barbarous tribe, Paeons and Dardans and Triballi, till he came to the Ister stream, and the dreary Scythian plains. And he walked across the Ister dry-shod, and away through the moors and fens, day and night toward the bleak north-west, turning neither to the right hand nor the left, till he came to the Unshapen Land, and the place which has no name.

And seven days he walked through it, on a path which few can tell; for those who have trodden it like least to speak of it, and those who go there again in dreams are glad enough when they awake; till he came to the edge of the everlasting night, where the air was full of feathers, and the soil was hard with ice; and there at last he found the three Grey Sisters, by the shore of the freezing sea, nodding upon a white log of drift-wood, beneath the cold white winter moon; and they chanted a low song together, 'Why the old times were better than the new.'

There was no living thing around them, not a fly, not a moss upon the rocks. Neither seal nor sea-gull dare come near, lest the ice should clutch them in its claws. The surge broke up in foam, but it fell again in flakes of snow; and it frosted the hair of the three Grey Sisters, and the bones in the ice-cliff above their heads. They passed the eye from one to the other, but for all that they could not see; and they passed the tooth from one to the other, but for all that they could not eat; and they sat in the full glare of the moon, but they were none the warmer for her beams. And Perseus pitied the three Grey Sisters; but they did not pity themselves.

So he said, “Oh, venerable mothers, wisdom is the daughter of old age. You therefore should know many things. Tell me, if you can, the path to the Gorgon.”

Then one cried, “Who is this who reproaches us with old age?” And another, “This is the voice of one of the children of men.”

And he, “I do not reproach, but honour your old age, and I am one of the sons of men and of the heroes. The rulers of Olympus have sent me to you to ask the way to the Gorgon.”

Then one, “There are new rulers in Olympus, and all new things are bad.” And another, “We hate your rulers, and the heroes, and all the children of men. We are the kindred of the Titans, and the Giants, and the Gorgons, and the ancient monsters of the deep.” And another, “Who is this rash and insolent man who pushes unbidden into our world?” And the first, “There never was such a world as ours, nor will be; if we let him see it, he will spoil it all.”

Then one cried, “Give me the eye, that I may see him;” and another, “Give me the tooth, that I may bite him.”

But Perseus, when he saw that they were foolish and proud, and did not love the children of men, left off pitying them, and said to himself, “Hungry men must needs be hasty; if I stay making many words here, I shall be starved.” Then he stepped close to them, and watched till they passed the eye from hand to hand. And as they groped about between themselves, he held out his own hand gently, till one of them put the eye into it, fancying that it was the hand of her sister. Then he sprang back, and laughed, and cried:

“Cruel and proud old women, I have your eye; and I will throw it into the sea, unless you tell me the path to the Gorgon, and swear to me that you tell me right.”

Then they wept, and chattered, and scolded; but in vain. They were forced to tell the truth, though, when they told it, Perseus could hardly make out the road.

“You must go,” they said, “foolish boy, to the southward, into the ugly glare of the sun, till you come to Atlas the Giant, who holds the heaven and the earth apart. And you must ask his daughters, the Hesperides, who are young and foolish like yourself. And now give us back our eye, for we have forgotten all the rest.”

So Perseus gave them back their eye; but instead of using it, they nodded and fell fast asleep, and were turned into blocks of ice, till the tide came up and washed them all away. And now they float up and down like icebergs for ever, weeping whenever they meet the sunshine, and the fruitful summer and the warm south wind, which fill young hearts with joy.

But Perseus leaped away to the southward, leaving the snow and the ice behind: past the isle of the Hyperboreans, and the tin isles, and the long Iberian shore, while the sun rose higher day by day upon a bright blue summer sea. And the terns and the sea-gulls swept laughing round his head, and called to him to stop and play, and the dolphins gambolled up as he passed, and offered to carry him on their backs. And all night long the sea-nymphs sang sweetly, and the Tritons blew upon their conchs, as they played round Galataea their queen, in her car of pearled shells. Day by day the sun rose higher, and leaped more swiftly into the sea at night, and more swiftly out of the sea at dawn; while Perseus skimmed over the billows like a sea-gull, and his feet were never wetted; and leapt on from wave to wave, and his limbs were never weary, till he saw far away a mighty mountain, all rose-red in the setting sun. Its feet were wrapped in forests, and its head in wreaths of cloud; and Perseus knew that it was Atlas, who holds the heavens and the earth apart.

He came to the mountain, and leapt on shore, and wandered upward, among pleasant valleys and waterfalls, and tall trees and strange ferns and flowers; but there was no smoke rising from any glen, nor house, nor sign of man.

At last he heard sweet voices singing; and he guessed that he was come to the garden of the Nymphs, the daughters of the Evening Star.

They sang like nightingales among the thickets, and Perseus stopped to hear their song; but the words which they spoke he could not understand; no, nor no man after him for many a hundred years. So he stepped forward and saw them dancing, hand in hand around the charmed tree, which bent under its golden fruit; and round the tree-foot was coiled the dragon, old Ladon the sleepless snake, who lies there for ever, listening to the song of the maidens, blinking and watching with dry bright eyes.

Then Perseus stopped, not because he feared the dragon, but because he was bashful before those fair maids; but when they saw him, they too

stopped, and called to him with trembling voices:

"Who are you? Are you Heracles the mighty, who will come to rob our garden, and carry off our golden fruit?"

And he answered, "I am not Heracles the mighty, and I want none of your golden fruit. Tell me, fair Nymphs, the way which leads to the Gorgon, that I may go on my way and slay her."

"Not yet, not yet, fair boy; come dance with us around the tree in the garden which knows no winter, the home of the south wind and the sun. Come hither and play with us awhile; we have danced alone here for a thousand years, and our hearts are weary with longing for a playfellow. So come, come, come!"

"I cannot dance with you, fair maidens; for I must do the errand of the Immortals. So tell me the way to the Gorgon, lest I wander and perish in the waves."

Then they sighed and wept; and answered: "The Gorgon! She will freeze you into stone."

"It is better to die like a hero than to live like an ox in a stall. The Immortals have lent me weapons, and they will give me wit to use them."

Then they sighed again and answered, "Fair boy, if you are bent on your own ruin, be it so. We know not the way to the Gorgon; but we will ask the giant Atlas, above upon the mountain peak, the brother of our father, the silver Evening Star. He sits aloft and sees across the ocean, and far away into the Unshapen Land."

So they went up the mountain to Atlas their uncle, and Perseus went up with them. And they found the giant kneeling, as he held the heavens and the earth apart.

They asked him, and he answered mildly, pointing to the sea-board with his mighty hand, "I can see the Gorgons lying on an island far away, but this youth can never come near them, unless he has the hat of darkness, which whosoever wears cannot be seen."

Then cried Perseus, "Where is that hat, that I may find it?"

But the giant smiled. "No living mortal can find that hat, for it lies in the depths of Hades, in the regions of the dead. But my nieces are immortal, and they shall fetch it for you, if you will promise me one thing and keep your faith."

Then Perseus promised; and the giant said, “When you come back with the head of Medusa, you shall show me the beautiful horror, that I may lose my feeling and my breathing, and become a stone for ever; for it is weary labour for me to hold the heavens and the earth apart.”

Then Perseus promised, and the eldest of the Nymphs went down, and into a dark cavern among the cliffs, out of which came smoke and thunder, for it was one of the mouths of Hell.

And Perseus and the Nymphs sat down seven days, and waited trembling, till the Nymph came up again; and her face was pale, and her eyes dazzled with the light, for she had been long in the dreary darkness; but in her hand was the magic hat.

Then all the Nymphs kissed Perseus, and wept over him a long while; but he was only impatient to be gone. And at last they put the hat upon his head, and he vanished out of their sight.

But Perseus went on boldly, past many an ugly sight, far away into the heart of the Unshapen Land, beyond the streams of Ocean, to the isles where no ship cruises, where is neither night nor day, where nothing is in its right place, and nothing has a name; till he heard the rustle of the Gorgons’ wings and saw the glitter of their brazen talons; and then he knew that it was time to halt, lest Medusa should freeze him into stone.

He thought awhile with himself, and remembered Athene’s words. He rose aloft into the air, and held the mirror of the shield above his head, and looked up into it that he might see all that was below him.

And he saw the three Gorgons sleeping as huge as elephants. He knew that they could not see him, because the hat of darkness hid him; and yet he trembled as he sank down near them, so terrible were those brazen claws.

Two of the Gorgons were foul as swine, and lay sleeping heavily, as swine sleep, with their mighty wings outspread; but Medusa tossed to and fro restlessly, and as she tossed Perseus pitied her, she looked so fair and sad. Her plumage was like the rainbow, and her face was like the face of a nymph, only her eyebrows were knit, and her lips clenched, with everlasting care and pain; and her long neck gleamed so white in the mirror that Perseus had not the heart to strike, and said, “Ah, that it had been either of her sisters!”

But as he looked, from among her tresses the vipers' heads awoke, and peeped up with their bright dry eyes, and showed their fangs, and hissed; and Medusa, as she tossed, threw back her wings and showed her brazen claws; and Perseus saw that, for all her beauty, she was as foul and venomous as the rest.

Then he came down and stepped to her boldly, and looked steadfastly on his mirror, and struck with Herpé stoutly once; and he did not need to strike again.

Then he wrapped the head in the goat-skin, turning away his eyes, and sprang into the air aloft, faster than he ever sprang before.

For Medusa's wings and talons rattled as she sank dead upon the rocks; and her two foul sisters woke, and saw her lying dead.

Into the air they sprang yelling and looked for him who had done the deed. Thrice they swung round and round, like hawks who beat for a partridge; and thrice they snuffed round and round, like hounds who draw upon a deer. At last they struck upon the scent of the blood, and they checked for a moment to make sure; and then on they rushed with a fearful howl, while the wind rattled hoarse in their wings.

On they rushed, sweeping and flapping, like eagles after a hare; and Perseus' blood ran cold, for all his courage, as he saw them come howling on his track; and he cried, "Bear me well now, brave sandals, for the hounds of Death are at my heels!"

And well the brave sandals bore him, aloft through cloud and sunshine, across the shoreless sea; and fast followed the hounds of Death, as the roar of their wings came down the wind. But the roar came down fainter and fainter, and the howl of their voices died away; for the sandals were too swift, even for Gorgons, and by nightfall they were far behind, two black specks in the southern sky, till the sun sank and he saw them no more.

Then he came again to Atlas, and the garden of the Nymphs; and when the giant heard him coming he groaned, and said, "Fulfil thy promise to me."

Then Perseus held up to him the Gorgon's head, and he had rest from all his toil; for he became a crag of stone, which sleeps for ever far above the clouds.

Then he thanked the Nymphs, and asked them, "By what road shall I go homeward again, for I wandered far round in coming hither?"

And they wept and cried, “Go home no more, but stay and play with us, the lonely maidens, who dwell for ever far away from Gods and men.”

But he refused, and they told him his road, and said, “Take with you this magic fruit, which, if you eat once, you will not hunger for seven days. For you must go eastward and eastward ever, over the doleful Lybian shore, which Poseidon gave to Father Zeus, when he burst open the Bosphorus and the Hellespont, and drowned the fair Lectonian land. And Zeus took that land in exchange, a fair bargain, much bad ground for a little good, and to this day it lies waste and desert with shingle, and rock, and sand.”

Then they kissed Perseus, and wept over him, and he leapt down the mountain, and went on, lessening and lessening like a sea-gull, away and out to sea.

# How Perseus Came to the Aethiops

**SO PERSEUS** flitted onward to the north-east, over many a league of sea, till he came to the rolling sand-hills and the dreary Lybian shore.

And he flitted on across the desert: over rock-ledges, and banks of shingle, and level wastes of sand, and shell-drifts bleaching in the sunshine, and the skeletons of great sea-monsters, and dead bones of ancient giants, strewn up and down upon the old sea-floor. And as he went the blood-drops fell to the earth from the Gorgon's head, and became poisonous asps and adders, which breed in the desert to this day.

Over the sands he went – he never knew how far or how long, feeding on the fruit which the Nymphs had given him, till he saw the hills of the Psylli, and the Dwarfs who fought with cranes. Their spears were of reeds and rushes, and their houses of the egg-shells of the cranes; and Perseus laughed, and went his way to the north-east, hoping all day long to see the blue Mediterranean sparkling, that he might fly across it to his home.

But now came down a mighty wind, and swept him back southward toward the desert. All day long he strove against it; but even the winged sandals could not prevail. So he was forced to float down the wind all night; and when the morning dawned there was nothing to be seen, save the same old hateful waste of sand.

And out of the north the sandstorms rushed upon him, blood-red pillars and wreaths, blotting out the noonday sun; and Perseus fled before them, lest he should be choked by the burning dust. At last the gale fell calm, and he tried to go northward again; but again came down the sandstorms, and swept him back into the waste, and then all was calm and cloudless as before. Seven days he strove against the storms, and seven days he was driven back, till he was spent with thirst and hunger, and his tongue clove to the roof of his mouth. Here and there he fancied that he saw a fair lake, and the sunbeams shining on the water; but when he came to it, it vanished at his feet, and there was nought but burning sand. And if he had not been of the race of the Immortals, he would have perished in the waste; but his life was strong within him, because it was more than man's.

Then he cried to Athene, and said:

“Oh, fair and pure, if thou hearest me, wilt thou leave me here to die of drought? I have brought thee the Gorgon’s head at thy bidding, and hitherto thou hast prospered my journey; dost thou desert me at the last? Else why will not these immortal sandals prevail, even against the desert storms? Shall I never see my mother more, and the blue ripple round Seriphos, and the sunny hills of Hellas?”

So he prayed; and after he had prayed there was a great silence.

The heaven was still above his head, and the sand was still beneath his feet; and Perseus looked up, but there was nothing but the blinding sun in the blinding blue; and round him, but there was nothing but the blinding sand.

And Perseus stood still a while, and waited, and said, “Surely I am not here without the will of the Immortals, for Athene will not lie. Were not these sandals to lead me in the right road? Then the road in which I have tried to go must be a wrong road.”

Then suddenly his ears were opened, and he heard the sound of running water.

And at that his heart was lifted up, though he scarcely dare believe his ears; and weary as he was, he hurried forward, though he could scarcely stand upright; and within a bowshot of him was a glen in the sand, and marble rocks, and date-trees, and a lawn of gay green grass. And through the lawn a streamlet sparkled and wandered out beyond the trees, and vanished in the sand.

The water trickled among the rocks, and a pleasant breeze rustled in the dry date-branches and Perseus laughed for joy, and leapt down the cliff, and drank of the cool water, and ate of the dates, and slept upon the turf, and leapt up and went forward again: but not toward the north this time; for he said, “Surely Athene hath sent me hither, and will not have me go homeward yet. What if there be another noble deed to be done, before I see the sunny hills of Hellas?”

So he went east, and east for ever, by fresh oases and fountains, date-palms, and lawns of grass, till he saw before him a mighty mountain-wall, all rose-red in the setting sun.

Then he towered in the air like an eagle, for his limbs were strong again; and he flew all night across the mountain till the day began to dawn, and

rosy-fingered Eos came blushing up the sky. And then, behold, beneath him was the long green garden of Egypt and the shining stream of Nile.

And he saw cities walled up to heaven, and temples, and obelisks, and pyramids, and giant Gods of stone. And he came down amid fields of barley, and flax, and millet, and clambering gourds; and saw the people coming out of the gates of a great city, and setting to work, each in his place, among the water-courses, parting the streams among the plants cunningly with their feet, according to the wisdom of the Egyptians. But when they saw him they all stopped their work, and gathered round him, and cried:

"Who art thou, fair youth? And what bearest thou beneath thy goat-skin there? Surely thou art one of the Immortals; for thy skin is white like ivory, and ours is red like clay. Thy hair is like threads of gold, and ours is black and curled. Surely thou art one of the Immortals;" and they would have worshipped him then and there; but Perseus said:

"I am not one of the Immortals; but I am a hero of the Hellens. And I have slain the Gorgon in the wilderness, and bear her head with me. Give me food, therefore, that I may go forward and finish my work."

Then they gave him food, and fruit, and wine; but they would not let him go. And when the news came into the city that the Gorgon was slain, the priests came out to meet him, and the maidens, with songs and dances, and timbrels and harps; and they would have brought him to their temple and to their king; but Perseus put on the hat of darkness, and vanished away out of their sight.

Therefore the Egyptians looked long for his return, but in vain, and worshipped him as a hero, and made a statue of him in Chemmis, which stood for many a hundred years; and they said that he appeared to them at times, with sandals a cubit long; and that whenever he appeared the season was fruitful, and the Nile rose high that year.

Then Perseus went to the eastward, along the Red Sea shore; and then, because he was afraid to go into the Arabian deserts, he turned northward once more, and this time no storm hindered him.

He went past the Isthmus, and Mount Casius, and the vast Serbonian bog, and up the shore of Palestine, where the dark-faced Aethiops dwelt.

He flew on past pleasant hills and valleys, like Argos itself, or Lacedaemon, or the fair Vale of Tempe. But the lowlands were all drowned

by floods, and the highlands blasted by fire, and the hills heaved like a babbling cauldron, before the wrath of King Poseidon, the shaker of the earth.

And Perseus feared to go inland, but flew along the shore above the sea; and he went on all the day, and the sky was black with smoke; and he went on all the night, and the sky was red with flame.

And at the dawn of day he looked toward the cliffs; and at the water's edge, under a black rock, he saw a white image stand.

"This," thought he, "must surely be the statue of some sea-God; I will go near and see what kind of Gods these barbarians worship."

So he came near; but when he came, it was no statue, but a maiden of flesh and blood; for he could see her tresses streaming in the breeze; and as he came closer still, he could see how she shrank and shivered when the waves sprinkled her with cold salt spray. Her arms were spread above her head, and fastened to the rock with chains of brass; and her head drooped on her bosom, either with sleep, or weariness, or grief. But now and then she looked up and wailed, and called her mother; yet she did not see Perseus, for the cap of darkness was on his head.

Full of pity and indignation, Perseus drew near and looked upon the maid. Her cheeks were darker than his were, and her hair was blue-black like a hyacinth; but Perseus thought, "I have never seen so beautiful a maiden; no, not in all our isles. Surely she is a king's daughter. Do barbarians treat their kings' daughters thus? She is too fair, at least, to have done any wrong I will speak to her."

And, lifting the hat from his head, he flashed into her sight. She shrieked with terror, and tried to hide her face with her hair, for she could not with her hands; but Perseus cried:

"Do not fear me, fair one; I am a Hellen, and no barbarian. What cruel men have bound you? But first I will set you free."

And he tore at the fetters, but they were too strong for him; while the maiden cried:

"Touch me not; I am accursed, devoted as a victim to the sea-Gods. They will slay you, if you dare to set me free."

"Let them try," said Perseus; and drawing Herpé from his thigh, he cut through the brass as if it had been flax.

“Now,” he said, “you belong to me, and not to these sea-Gods, whosoever they may be!” But she only called the more on her mother.

“Why call on your mother? She can be no mother to have left you here. If a bird is dropped out of the nest, it belongs to the man who picks it up. If a jewel is cast by the wayside, it is his who dare win it and wear it, as I will win you and will wear you. I know now why Pallas-Athene sent me hither. She sent me to gain a prize worth all my toil and more.”

And he clasped her in his arms, and cried, “Where are these sea-Gods, cruel and unjust, who doom fair maids to death? I carry the weapons of Immortals. Let them measure their strength against mine! But tell me, maiden, who you are, and what dark fate brought you here.”

And she answered, weeping:

“I am the daughter of Cepheus, King of Iopa, and my mother is Cassiopoeia of the beautiful tresses, and they called me Andromeda, as long as life was mine. And I stand bound here, hapless that I am, for the sea-monster’s food, to atone for my mother’s sin. For she boasted of me once that I was fairer than Atergatis, Queen of the Fishes; so she in her wrath sent the sea-floods, and her brother the Fire King sent the earthquakes, and wasted all the land, and after the floods a monster bred of the slime, who devours all living things. And now he must devour me, guiltless though I am – me who never harmed a living thing, nor saw a fish upon the shore but I gave it life, and threw it back into the sea; for in our land we eat no fish, for fear of Atergatis their queen. Yet the priests say that nothing but my blood can atone for a sin which I never committed.”

But Perseus laughed, and said, “A sea-monster? I have fought with worse than him: I would have faced Immortals for your sake; how much more a beast of the sea?”

Then Andromeda looked up at him, and new hope was kindled in her breast, so proud and fair did he stand, with one hand round her, and in the other the glittering sword. But she only sighed, and wept the more, and cried:

“Why will you die, young as you are? Is there not death and sorrow enough in the world already? It is noble for me to die, that I may save the lives of a whole people; but you, better than them all, why should I slay you too? Go you your way; I must go mine.”

But Perseus cried, “Not so; for the Lords of Olympus, whom I serve, are the friends of the heroes, and help them on to noble deeds. Led by them, I slew the Gorgon, the beautiful horror; and not without them do I come hither, to slay this monster with that same Gorgon’s head. Yet hide your eyes when I leave you, lest the sight of it freeze you too to stone.”

But the maiden answered nothing, for she could not believe his words. And then, suddenly looking up, she pointed to the sea, and shrieked:

“There he comes, with the sunrise, as they promised. I must die now. How shall I endure it? Oh, go! Is it not dreadful enough to be torn piecemeal, without having you to look on?” And she tried to thrust him away.

But he said, “I go; yet promise me one thing ere I go: that if I slay this beast you will be my wife, and come back with me to my kingdom in fruitful Argos, for I am a king’s heir. Promise me, and seal it with a kiss.”

Then she lifted up her face, and kissed him; and Perseus laughed for joy, and flew upward, while Andromeda crouched trembling on the rock, waiting for what might befall.

On came the great sea-monster, coasting along like a huge black galley, lazily breasting the ripple, and stopping at times by creek or headland to watch for the laughter of girls at their bleaching, or cattle pawing on the sand-hills, or boys bathing on the beach. His great sides were fringed with clustering shells and sea-weeds, and the water gurgled in and out of his wide jaws, as he rolled along, dripping and glistening in the beams of the morning sun.

At last he saw Andromeda, and shot forward to take his prey, while the waves foamed white behind him, and before him the fish fled leaping.

Then down from the height of the air fell Perseus like a shooting star; down to the crests of the waves, while Andromeda hid her face as he shouted; and then there was silence for a while.

At last she looked up trembling, and saw Perseus springing toward her; and instead of the monster a long black rock, with the sea rippling quietly round it.

Who then so proud as Perseus, as he leapt back to the rock, and lifted his fair Andromeda in his arms, and flew with her to the cliff-top, as a falcon carries a dove?

Who so proud as Perseus, and who so joyful as all the Aethiop people? For they had stood watching the monster from the cliffs, wailing for the maiden's fate. And already a messenger had gone to Cepheus and Cassiopoeia, where they sat in sackcloth and ashes on the ground, in the innermost palace chambers, awaiting their daughter's end. And they came, and all the city with them, to see the wonder, with songs and with dances, with cymbals and harps, and received their daughter back again, as one alive from the dead.

Then Cepheus said, "Hero of the Hellens, stay here with me and be my son-in-law, and I will give you the half of my kingdom."

"I will be your son-in-law," said Perseus, "but of your kingdom I will have none, for I long after the pleasant land of Greece, and my mother who waits for me at home."

Then Cepheus said, "You must not take my daughter away at once, for she is to us like one alive from the dead. Stay with us here a year, and after that you shall return with honour." And Perseus consented; but before he went to the palace he bade the people bring stones and wood, and built three altars, one to Athene, and one to Hermes, and one to Father Zeus, and offered bullocks and rams.

And some said, "This is a pious man;" yet the priests said, "The Sea Queen will be yet more fierce against us, because her monster is slain." But they were afraid to speak aloud, for they feared the Gorgon's head. So they went up to the palace; and when they came in, there stood in the hall Phineus, the brother of Cepheus, chafing like a bear robbed of her whelps, and with him his sons, and his servants, and many an armed man; and he cried to Cepheus:

"You shall not marry your daughter to this stranger, of whom no one knows even the name. Was not Andromeda betrothed to my son? And now she is safe again, has he not a right to claim her?"

But Perseus laughed, and answered, "If your son is in want of a bride, let him save a maiden for himself. As yet he seems but a helpless bridegroom. He left this one to die, and dead she is to him. I saved her alive, and alive she is to me, but to no one else. Ungrateful man! Have I not saved your land, and the lives of your sons and daughters, and will you requite me thus? Go, or it will be worse for you." But all the men-at-arms drew their swords, and rushed on him like wild beasts.

Then he unveiled the Gorgon's head, and said, "This has delivered my bride from one wild beast: it shall deliver her from many." And as he spoke Phineus and all his men-at-arms stopped short, and stiffened each man as he stood; and before Perseus had drawn the goat-skin over the face again, they were all turned into stone.

Then Persons bade the people bring levers and roll them out; and what was done with them after that I cannot tell.

So they made a great wedding-feast, which lasted seven whole days, and who so happy as Perseus and Andromeda?

But on the eighth night Perseus dreamed a dream; and he saw standing beside him Pallas-Athene, as he had seen her in Seriphos, seven long years before; and she stood and called him by name, and said:

"Perseus, you have played the man, and see, you have your reward. Know now that the Gods are just, and help him who helps himself. Now give me here Herpé the sword, and the sandals, and the hat of darkness, that I may give them back to their owners; but the Gorgon's head you shall keep a while, for you will need it in your land of Greece. Then you shall lay it up in my temple at Seriphos, that I may wear it on my shield for ever, a terror to the Titans and the monsters, and the foes of Gods and men. And as for this land, I have appeased the sea and the fire, and there shall be no more floods nor earthquakes. But let the people build altars to Father Zeus, and to me, and worship the Immortals, the Lords of heaven and earth."

And Perseus rose to give her the sword, and the cap, and the sandals; but he woke, and his dream vanished away. And yet it was not altogether a dream; for the goat-skin with the head was in its place; but the sword, and the cap, and the sandals were gone, and Perseus never saw them more.

Then a great awe fell on Perseus; and he went out in the morning to the people, and told his dream, and bade them build altars to Zeus, the Father of Gods and men, and to Athene, who gives wisdom to heroes; and fear no more the earthquakes and the floods, but sow and build in peace. And they did so for a while, and prospered; but after Perseus was gone they forgot Zeus and Athene, and worshipped again Atergatis the queen, and the undying fish of the sacred lake, where Deucalion's deluge was swallowed up, and they burnt their children before the Fire King, till Zeus was angry with that foolish people, and brought a strange nation against them out of

Egypt, who fought against them and wasted them utterly, and dwelt in their cities for many a hundred years.

# How Perseus Came Home Again

**AND WHEN A YEAR** was ended Perseus hired Phoenicians from Tyre, and cut down cedars, and built himself a noble galley; and painted its cheeks with vermilion, and pitched its sides with pitch; and in it he put Andromeda, and all her dowry of jewels, and rich shawls, and spices from the East; and great was the weeping when they rowed away. But the remembrance of his brave deed was left behind; and Andromeda's rock was shown at Iopa in Palestine till more than a thousand years were past.

So Perseus and the Phoenicians rowed to the westward, across the sea of Crete, till they came to the blue Aegean and the pleasant Isles of Hellas, and Seriphos, his ancient home.

Then he left his galley on the beach, and went up as of old; and he embraced his mother, and Dictys his good foster-father, and they wept over each other a long while, for it was seven years and more since they had met.

Then Perseus went out, and up to the hall of Polydectes; and underneath the goat-skin he bore the Gorgon's head.

And when he came into the hall, Polydectes sat at the table-head, and all his nobles and landowners on either side, each according to his rank, feasting on the fish and the goat's flesh, and drinking the blood-red wine. The harpers harped, and the revellers shouted, and the wine-cups rang merrily as they passed from hand to hand, and great was the noise in the hall of Polydectes.

Then Persons stood upon the threshold, and called to the king by name. But none of the guests knew Perseus, for he was changed by his long journey. He had gone out a boy, and he was come home a hero; his eye shone like an eagle's, and his beard was like a lion's beard, and he stood up like a wild bull in his pride.

But Polydectes the wicked knew him, and hardened his heart still more; and scornfully he called:

"Ah, foundling! Have you found it more easy to promise than to fulfil?"

“Those whom the Gods help fulfil their promises; and those who despise them, reap as they have sown. Behold the Gorgon’s head!”

Then Perseus drew back the goat-skin, and held aloft the Gorgon’s head.

Pale grew Polydectes and his guests as they looked upon that dreadful face. They tried to rise up from their seats: but from their seats they never rose, but stiffened, each man where he sat, into a ring of cold grey stones.

Then Perseus turned and left them, and went down to his galley in the bay; and he gave the kingdom to good Dictys, and sailed away with his mother and his bride.

And Polydectes and his guests sat still, with the wine-cups before them on the board, till the rafters crumbled down above their heads, and the walls behind their backs, and the table crumbled down between them, and the grass sprung up about their feet: but Polydectes and his guests sit on the hillside, a ring of grey stones until this day.

But Perseus rowed westward toward Argos, and landed, and went up to the town. And when he came, he found that Acrisius his grandfather had fled. For Proetus his wicked brother had made war against him afresh; and had come across the river from Tiryns, and conquered Argos, and Acrisius had fled to Larissa, in the country of the wild Pelasgi.

Then Perseus called the Argives together, and told them who he was, and all the noble deeds which he had done. And all the nobles and the yeomen made him king, for they saw that he had a royal heart; and they fought with him against Argos, and took it, and killed Proetus, and made the Cyclopes serve them, and build them walls round Argos, like the walls which they had built at Tiryns; and there were great rejoicings in the vale of Argos, because they had got a king from Father Zeus.

But Perseus’ heart yearned after his grandfather, and he said, “Surely he is my flesh and blood, and he will love me now that I am come home with honour: I will go and find him, and bring him home, and we will reign together in peace.”

So Perseus sailed away with his Phoenicians, round Hydrea and Sunium, past Marathon and the Attic shore, and through Euripus, and up the long Euboean sea, till he came to the town of Larissa, where the wild Pelasgi dwelt.

And when he came there, all the people were in the fields, and there was feasting, and all kinds of games; for Teutamenes their king wished to

honour Acrisius, because he was the king of a mighty land.

So Perseus did not tell his name, but went up to the games unknown; for he said, “If I carry away the prize in the games, my grandfather’s heart will be softened toward me.”

So he threw off his helmet, and his cuirass, and all his clothes, and stood among the youths of Larissa, while all wondered at him, and said, “Who is this young stranger, who stands like a wild bull in his pride? Surely he is one of the heroes, the sons of the Immortals, from Olympus.”

And when the games began, they wondered yet more; for Perseus was the best man of all at running, and leaping, and wrestling and throwing the javelin; and he won four crowns, and took them, and then he said to himself, “There is a fifth crown yet to be won: I will win that, and lay them all upon the knees of my grandfather.”

And as he spoke, he saw where Acrisius sat, by the side of Teutamenes the king, with his white beard flowing down upon his knees, and his royal staff in his hand; and Perseus wept when he looked at him, for his heart yearned after his kin; and he said, “Surely he is a kingly old man, yet he need not be ashamed of his grandson.”

Then he took the quoits, and hurled them, five fathoms beyond all the rest; and the people shouted, “Further yet, brave stranger! There has never been such a hurler in this land.”

Then Perseus put out all his strength, and hurled. But a gust of wind came from the sea, and carried the quoit aside, and far beyond all the rest; and it fell on the foot of Acrisius, and he swooned away with the pain.

Perseus shrieked, and ran up to him; but when they lifted the old man up he was dead, for his life was slow and feeble.

Then Perseus rent his clothes, and cast dust upon his head, and wept a long while for his grandfather. At last he rose, and called to all the people aloud, and said:

“The Gods are true, and what they have ordained must be. I am Perseus, the grandson of this dead man, the far-famed slayer of the Gorgon.”

Then he told them how the prophecy had declared that he should kill his grandfather, and all the story of his life.

So they made a great mourning for Acrisius, and burnt him on a right rich pile; and Perseus went to the temple, and was purified from the guilt of the death, because he had done it unknowingly.

Then he went home to Argos, and reigned there well with fair Andromeda; and they had four sons and three daughters, and died in a good old age.

And when they died, the ancients say, Athene took them up into the sky, with Cepheus and Cassiopoeia. And there on starlight nights you may see them shining still; Cepheus with his kingly crown, and Cassiopoeia in her ivory chair, plaiting her star-spangled tresses, and Perseus with the Gorgon’s head, and fair Andromeda beside him, spreading her long white arms across the heaven, as she stood when chained to the stone for the monster.

All night long, they shine, for a beacon to wandering sailors; but all day they feast with the Gods, on the still blue peaks of Olympus.

# The Adventures of Heracles

## Introduction

**SON OF ZEUS**, father of the Greek Gods, and Alcmene, a human, Heracles was born a mortal who could feel pain, but was possessed with immense strength, courage and intelligence; a man who bridged the gap between mortals and gods. As such, tales of his extraordinary life are legendary and his twelve labours rank as the most incredible of all. As penance for the murder of his children in a fit of insanity brought on by Hera – Zeus' queen who was jealous of Heracles – Heracles was forced to serve his cousin, the spiteful and cowardly King Eurystheus of Argos, for 12 years, performing any tasks that were asked of him, no matter how deadly and perilous. If Heracles could do this, his soul would be purified and he would earn immortality.

# Young Heracles

**AT THE TIME** of his birth Alcmene was living at Thebes with her husband Amphitryon, and thus the infant Heracles was born in the palace of his stepfather.

Aware of the animosity with which Hera persecuted all those who rivalled her in the affections of Zeus, Alcmene, fearful lest this hatred should be visited on her innocent child, entrusted him, soon after his birth, to the care of a faithful servant, with instructions to expose him in a certain field, and there leave him, feeling assured that the divine offspring of Zeus would not long remain without the protection of the gods.

Soon after the child had been thus abandoned, Hera and Pallas-Athene happened to pass by the field, and were attracted by its cries. Athene pityingly took up the infant in her arms, and prevailed upon the queen of heaven to put it to her breast; but no sooner had she done so, than the child, causing her pain, she angrily threw him to the ground, and left the spot. Athene, moved with compassion, carried him to Alcmene, and entreated her kind offices on behalf of the poor little foundling. Alcmene at once recognized her child, and joyfully accepted the charge.

Soon afterwards Hera, to her extreme annoyance, discovered whom she had nursed, and became filled with jealous rage. She now sent two venomous snakes into the chamber of Alcmene, which crept, unperceived by the nurses, to the cradle of the sleeping child. He awoke with a cry, and grasping a snake in each hand, strangled them both. Alcmene and her attendants, whom the cry of the child had awakened, rushed to the cradle, where, to their astonishment and terror, they beheld the two reptiles dead in the hands of the infant Heracles. Amphitryon was also attracted to the chamber by the commotion, and when he beheld this astounding proof of supernatural strength, he declared that the child must have been sent to him as a special gift from Zeus. He accordingly consulted the famous seer Tiresias, who now informed him of the divine origin of his stepson, and prognosticated for him a great and distinguished future.

When Amphitryon heard the noble destiny which awaited the child entrusted to his care, he resolved to educate him in a manner worthy of his future career. At a suitable age he himself taught him how to guide a chariot; Eurytus, how to handle the bow; Autolycus, dexterity in wrestling and boxing; and Castor, the art of armed warfare; whilst Linus, the son of Apollo, instructed him in music and letters.

Heracles was an apt pupil; but undue harshness was intolerable to his high spirit, and old Linus, who was not the gentlest of teachers, one day corrected him with blows, whereupon the boy angrily took up his lyre, and, with one stroke of his powerful arm, killed his tutor on the spot.

Apprehensive lest the ungovernable temper of the youth might again involve him in similar acts of violence, Amphitryon sent him into the country, where he placed him under the charge of one of his most trusted herdsmen. Here, as he grew up to manhood, his extraordinary stature and strength became the wonder and admiration of all beholders. His aim, whether with spear, lance, or bow, was unerring, and at the age of eighteen he was considered to be the strongest as well as the most beautiful youth in all Greece.

Heracles felt that the time had now arrived when it became necessary to decide for himself how to make use of the extraordinary powers with which he had been endowed by the gods; and in order to meditate in solitude on this all-important subject, he repaired to a lonely and secluded spot in the heart of the forest.

Here two females of great beauty appeared to him. One was Vice, the other Virtue. The former was full of artificial wiles and fascinating arts, her face painted and her dress gaudy and attractive; whilst the latter was of noble bearing and modest mien, her robes of spotless purity.

Vice stepped forward and thus addressed him: “If you will walk in my paths, and make me your friend, your life shall be one round of pleasure and enjoyment. You shall taste of every delight which can be procured on earth; the choicest viands, the most delicious wines, the most luxuriant of couches shall be ever at your disposal; and all this without any exertion on your part, either physical or mental.”

Virtue now spoke in her turn: “If you will follow me and be my friend, I promise you the reward of a good conscience, and the love and respect of your fellowmen. I cannot undertake to smooth your path with roses, or to

give you a life of idleness and pleasure; for you must know that the gods grant no good and desirable thing that is not earned by labour; and as you sow, so must you reap."

Heracles listened patiently and attentively to both speakers, and then, after mature deliberation, decided to follow in the paths of virtue, and henceforth to honour the gods, and to devote his life to the service of his country.

Full of these noble resolves he sought once more his rural home, where he was informed that on Mount Cithaeron, at the foot of which the herds of Amphitryon were grazing, a ferocious lion had fixed his lair, and was committing such frightful ravages among the flocks and herds that he had become the scourge and terror of the whole neighbourhood. Heracles at once armed himself and ascended the mountain, where he soon caught sight of the lion, and rushing at him with his sword succeeded in killing him. The hide of the animal he wore ever afterwards over his shoulders, and the head served him as a helmet.

As he was returning from this, his first exploit, he met the heralds of Erginus, king of the Minyans, who were proceeding to Thebes to demand their annual tribute of 100 oxen. Indignant at this humiliation of his native city, Heracles mutilated the heralds, and sent them back, with ropes round their necks, to their royal master.

Erginus was so incensed at the ill-treatment of his messengers that he collected an army and appeared before the gates of Thebes, demanding the surrender of Heracles. Creon, who was at this time king of Thebes, fearing the consequences of a refusal, was about to yield, when the hero, with the assistance of Amphitryon and a band of brave youths, advanced against the Minyans.

Heracles took possession of a narrow defile through which the enemy were compelled to pass, and as they entered the pass the Thebans fell upon them, killed their king Erginus, and completely routed them. In this engagement Amphitryon, the kind friend and foster-father of Heracles, lost his life. The hero now advanced upon Orchomenus, the capital of the Minyans, where he burned the royal castle and sacked the town.

After this signal victory all Greece rang with the fame of the young hero, and Creon, in gratitude for his great services, bestowed upon him his daughter Megara in marriage. The Olympian gods testified their

appreciation of his valour by sending him presents; Hermes gave him a sword, Phoebus-Apollo a bundle of arrows, Hephaestus a golden quiver, and Athene a coat of leather.

# Heracles and Eurystheus

**AND NOW IT WILL** be necessary to retrace our steps. Just before the birth of Heracles, Zeus, in an assembly of the gods, exultingly declared that the child who should be born on that day to the house of Perseus should rule over all his race. When Hera heard her lord's boastful announcement she knew well that it was for the child of the hated Alcmene that this brilliant destiny was designed; and in order to rob the son of her rival of his rights, she called to her aid the goddess Eilithyia, who retarded the birth of Heracles, and caused his cousin Eurystheus (another grandson of Perseus) to precede him into the world. And thus, as the word of the mighty Zeus was irrevocable, Heracles became the subject and servant of his cousin Eurystheus.

When, after his splendid victory over Erginus, the fame of Heracles spread throughout Greece, Eurystheus (who had become king of Mycenae), jealous of the reputation of the young hero, asserted his rights, and commanded him to undertake for him various difficult tasks. But the proud spirit of the hero rebelled against this humiliation, and he was about to refuse compliance, when Zeus appeared to him and desired him not to rebel against the Fates. Heracles now repaired to Delphi in order to consult the oracle, and received the answer that after performing ten tasks for his cousin Eurystheus his servitude would be at an end.

Soon afterwards Heracles fell into a state of the deepest melancholy, and through the influence of his inveterate enemy, the goddess Hera, this despondency developed into raving madness, in which condition he killed his own children. When he at length regained his reason he was so horrified and grieved at what he had done, that he shut himself up in his chamber and avoided all intercourse with men. But in his loneliness and seclusion the conviction that work would be the best means of procuring oblivion of the past decided him to enter, without delay, upon the tasks appointed him by Eurystheus.

# The Twelve Tasks

**HERACLES IS BEST-KNOWN** for the incredible daring and feats of strength he showed in achieving the 12 seemingly-impossible challenges set before him.

## The Nemean Lion

His first task was to bring to Eurystheus the skin of the much-dreaded Nemean lion, which ravaged the territory between Cleone and Nemea, and whose hide was invulnerable against any mortal weapon.

Heracles proceeded to the forest of Nemea, where, having discovered the lion's lair, he attempted to pierce him with his arrows; but finding these of no avail he felled him to the ground with his club, and before the animal had time to recover from the terrible blow, Heracles seized him by the neck and, with a mighty effort, succeeded in strangling him. He then made himself a coat of mail of the skin, and a new helmet of the head of the animal. Thus attired, he so alarmed Eurystheus by appearing suddenly before him, that the king concealed himself in his palace, and henceforth forbade Heracles to enter his presence, but commanded him to receive his behests, for the future, through his messenger Copreus.

## The Hydra

His second task was to slay the Hydra, a monster serpent (the offspring of Typhon and Echidna), bristling with nine heads, one of which was immortal. This monster infested the neighbourhood of Lerna, where she committed great depredations among the herds.

Heracles, accompanied by his nephew Iolaus, set out in a chariot for the marsh of Lerna, in the slimy waters of which he found her. He commenced the attack by assailing her with his fierce arrows, in order to force her to leave her lair, from which she at length emerged, and sought refuge in a wood on a neighbouring hill. Heracles now rushed forward and endeavoured to crush her heads by means of well-directed blows from his tremendous club; but no sooner was one head destroyed than it was immediately replaced by two others. He next seized the monster in his

powerful grasp; but at this juncture a giant crab came to the assistance of the Hydra and commenced biting the feet of her assailant. Heracles destroyed this new adversary with his club, and now called upon his nephew to come to his aid. At his command Iolaus set fire to the neighbouring trees, and, with a burning branch, seared the necks of the monster as Heracles cut them off, thus effectually preventing the growth of more. Heracles next struck off the immortal head, which he buried by the road-side, and placed over it a heavy stone. Into the poisonous blood of the monster he then dipped his arrows, which ever afterwards rendered wounds inflicted by them incurable.

## The Horned Hind

The third labour of Heracles was to bring the horned hind Cerunitis alive to Mycenae. This animal, which was sacred to Artemis, had golden antlers and hoofs of brass.

Not wishing to wound the hind Heracles patiently pursued her through many countries for a whole year, and overtook her at last on the banks of the river Ladon; but even there he was compelled, in order to secure her, to wound her with one of his arrows, after which he lifted her on his shoulders and carried her through Arcadia. On his way he met Artemis with her brother Phoebus-Apollo, when the goddess angrily reproved him for wounding her favourite hind; but Heracles succeeded in appeasing her displeasure, whereupon she permitted him to take the animal alive to Mycenae.

## The Erymanthian Boar

The fourth task imposed upon Heracles by Eurystheus was to bring alive to Mycenae the Erymanthian boar, which had laid waste the region of Erymantia, and was the scourge of the surrounding neighbourhood.

On his way thither he craved food and shelter of a Centaur named Pholus, who received him with generous hospitality, setting before him a good and plentiful repast. When Heracles expressed his surprise that at such a well-furnished board wine should be wanting, his host explained that the wine cellar was the common property of all the Centaurs, and that it was against the rules for a cask to be broached, except all were present to partake of it. By dint of persuasion, however, Heracles prevailed on his kind host to

make an exception in his favour; but the powerful, luscious odour of the good old wine soon spread over the mountains, and brought large numbers of Centaurs to the spot, all armed with huge rocks and fir-trees. Heracles drove them back with fire-brands, and then, following up his victory, pursued them with his arrows as far as Malea, where they took refuge in the cave of the kind old Centaur Chiron. Unfortunately, however, as Heracles was shooting at them with his poisoned darts, one of these pierced the knee of Chiron. When Heracles discovered that it was the friend of his early days that he had wounded, he was overcome with sorrow and regret. He at once extracted the arrow, and anointed the wound with a salve, the virtue of which had been taught him by Chiron himself. But all his efforts were unavailing. The wound, imbued with the deadly poison of the Hydra, was incurable, and so great was the agony of Chiron that, at the intercession of Heracles, death was sent him by the gods; for otherwise, being immortal, he would have been doomed to endless suffering.

Pholus, who had so kindly entertained Heracles, also perished by means of one of these arrows, which he had extracted from the body of a dead Centaur. While he was quietly examining it, astonished that so small and insignificant an object should be productive of such serious results, the arrow fell upon his foot and fatally wounded him. Full of grief at this untoward event, Heracles buried him with due honours, and then set out to chase the boar.

With loud shouts and terrible cries he first drove him out of the thickets into the deep snow-drifts which covered the summit of the mountain, and then, having at length wearied him with his incessant pursuit, he captured the exhausted animal, bound him with a rope, and brought him alive to Mycenae.

## The Augean Stables

After slaying the Erymanthian boar Eurystheus commanded Heracles to cleanse in one day the stables of Augeas.

Augeas was a king of Elis who was very rich in herds. Three thousand of his cattle he kept near the royal palace in an enclosure where the refuse had accumulated for many years. When Heracles presented himself before the king, and offered to cleanse his stables in one day, provided he should

receive in return a tenth part of the herds, Augeas, thinking the feat impossible, accepted his offer in the presence of his son Phyleus.

Near the palace were the two rivers Peneus and Alpheus, the streams of which Heracles conducted into the stables by means of a trench which he dug for this purpose, and as the waters rushed through the shed, they swept away with them the whole mass of accumulated filth.

But when Augeas heard that this was one of the labours imposed by Eurystheus, he refused the promised guerdon. Heracles brought the matter before a court, and called Phyleus as a witness to the justice of his claim, whereupon Augeas, without waiting for the delivery of the verdict, angrily banished Heracles and his son from his dominions.

## The Stymphalian Birds

The sixth task was to chase away the Stymphalides, which were immense birds of prey who, as we have seen (in the legend of the Argonauts), shot from their wings feathers sharp as arrows. The home of these birds was on the shore of the lake Stymphalis, in Arcadia (after which they were called), where they caused great destruction among men and cattle.

On approaching the lake, Heracles observed great numbers of them; and, while hesitating how to commence the attack, he suddenly felt a hand on his shoulder. Looking round he beheld the majestic form of Pallas-Athene, who held in her hand a gigantic pair of brazen clappers made by Hephaestus, with which she presented him; whereupon he ascended to the summit of a neighbouring hill, and commenced to rattle them violently. The shrill noise of these instruments was so intolerable to the birds that they rose into the air in terror, upon which he aimed at them with his arrows, destroying them in great numbers, whilst such as escaped his darts flew away, never to return.

## The Cretan Bull

The seventh labour of Heracles was to capture the Cretan bull. Minos, king of Crete, having vowed to sacrifice to Poseidon any animal which should first appear out of the sea, the god caused a magnificent bull to emerge from the waves in order to test the sincerity of the Cretan king, who, in making this vow, had alleged that he possessed no animal, among his own herds, worthy the acceptance of the mighty sea-god. Charmed with the

splendid animal sent by Poseidon, and eager to possess it, Minos placed it among his herds, and substituted as a sacrifice one of his own bulls. Hereupon Poseidon, in order to punish the cupidity of Minos, caused the animal to become mad, and commit such great havoc in the island as to endanger the safety of the inhabitants. When Heracles, therefore, arrived in Crete for the purpose of capturing the bull, Minos, far from opposing his design, gladly gave him permission to do so.

The hero not only succeeded in securing the animal, but tamed him so effectually that he rode on his back right across the sea as far as the Peloponnesus. He now delivered him up to Eurystheus, who at once set him at liberty, after which he became as ferocious and wild as before, roamed all over Greece into Arcadia, and was eventually killed by Theseus on the plains of Marathon.

## The Mares of Diomedes

The eighth labour of Heracles was to bring to Eurystheus the mares of Diomedes, a son of Ares, and king of the Bistonians, a warlike Thracian tribe. This king possessed a breed of wild horses of tremendous size and strength, whose food consisted of human flesh, and all strangers who had the misfortune to enter the country were made prisoners and flung before the horses, who devoured them.

When Heracles arrived he first captured the cruel Diomedes himself, and then threw him before his own mares, who, after devouring their master, became perfectly tame and tractable. They were then led by Heracles to the sea-shore, when the Bistonians, enraged at the loss of their king, rushed after the hero and attacked him. He now gave the animals in charge of his friend Abderus, and made such a furious onslaught on his assailants that they turned and fled.

But on his return from this encounter he found, to his great grief, that the mares had torn his friend in pieces and devoured him. After celebrating due funereal rites to the unfortunate Abderus, Heracles built a city in his honour, which he named after him. He then returned to Tiryns, where he delivered up the mares to Eurystheus, who set them loose on Mount Olympus, where they became the prey of wild beasts.

It was after the performance of this task that Heracles joined the Argonauts in their expedition to gain possession of the Golden Fleece, and

was left behind at Chios. During his wanderings he undertook his ninth labour, which was to bring to Eurystheus the girdle of Hippolyte, queen of the Amazons.

## The Girdle of Hippolyte

The Amazons, who dwelt on the shores of the Black Sea, near the river Thermodon, were a nation of warlike women, renowned for their strength, courage, and great skill in horsemanship. Their queen, Hippolyte, had received from her father, Ares, a beautiful girdle, which she always wore as a sign of her royal power and authority, and it was this girdle which Heracles was required to place in the hands of Eurystheus, who designed it as a gift for his daughter Admete.

Foreseeing that this would be a task of no ordinary difficulty the hero called to his aid a select band of brave companions, with whom he embarked for the Amazonian town Themiscyra. Here they were met by queen Hippolyte, who was so impressed by the extraordinary stature and noble bearing of Heracles that, on learning his errand, she at once consented to present him with the coveted girdle. But Hera, his implacable enemy, assuming the form of an Amazon, spread the report in the town that a stranger was about to carry off their queen. The Amazons at once flew to arms and mounted their horses, whereupon a battle ensued, in which many of their bravest warriors were killed or wounded. Among the latter was their most skilful leader, Melanippe, whom Heracles afterwards restored to Hippolyte, receiving the girdle in exchange.

On his voyage home the hero stopped at Troy, where a new adventure awaited him.

During the time that Apollo and Poseidon were condemned by Zeus to a temporary servitude on earth, they built for king Laomedon the famous walls of Troy, afterwards so renowned in history; but when their work was completed the king treacherously refused to give them the reward due to them. The incensed deities now combined to punish the offender. Apollo sent a pestilence which decimated the people, and Poseidon a flood, which bore with it a marine monster, who swallowed in his huge jaws all that came within his reach.

In his distress Laomedon consulted an oracle, and was informed that only by the sacrifice of his own daughter Hesione could the anger of the gods

be appeased. Yielding at length to the urgent appeals of his people he consented to make the sacrifice, and on the arrival of Heracles the maiden was already chained to a rock in readiness to be devoured by the monster.

When Laomedon beheld the renowned hero, whose marvellous feats of strength and courage had become the wonder and admiration of all mankind, he earnestly implored him to save his daughter from her impending fate, and to rid the country of the monster, holding out to him as a reward the horses which Zeus had presented to his grandfather Tros in compensation for robbing him of his son Ganymede.

Heracles unhesitatingly accepted the offer, and when the monster appeared, opening his terrible jaws to receive his prey, the hero, sword in hand, attacked and slew him. But the perfidious monarch once more broke faith, and Heracles, vowing future vengeance, departed for Mycenae, where he presented the girdle to Eurystheus.

## The Oxen of Geryones

The tenth labour of Heracles was the capture of the magnificent oxen belonging to the giant Geryon or Geryones, who dwelt on the island of Erythia in the bay of Gadria (Cadiz). This giant, who was the son of Chrysaor, had three bodies with three heads, six hands, and six feet. He possessed a herd of splendid cattle, which were famous for their size, beauty, and rich red colour. They were guarded by another giant named Eurytion, and a two-headed dog called Orthrus, the offspring of Typhon and Echidna.

In choosing for him a task so replete with danger, Eurystheus was in hopes that he might rid himself for ever of his hated cousin. But the indomitable courage of the hero rose with the prospect of this difficult and dangerous undertaking.

After a long and wearisome journey he at last arrived at the western coast of Africa, where, as a monument of his perilous expedition, he erected the famous ‘Pillars of Hercules,’ one of which he placed on each side of the Straits of Gibraltar. Here he found the intense heat so insufferable that he angrily raised his bow towards heaven, and threatened to shoot the sun-god. But Helios, far from being incensed at his audacity, was so struck with admiration at his daring that he lent to him the golden boat with

which he accomplished his nocturnal transit from West to East, and thus Heracles crossed over safely to the island of Erythia.

No sooner had he landed than Eurytion, accompanied by his savage dog Orthrus, fiercely attacked him; but Heracles, with a superhuman effort, slew the dog and then his master. Hereupon he collected the herd, and was proceeding to the sea-shore when Geryones himself met him, and a desperate encounter took place, in which the giant perished.

Heracles then drove the cattle into the sea, and seizing one of the oxen by the horns, swam with them over to the opposite coast of Iberia. Then driving his magnificent prize before him through Gaul, Italy, Illyria, and Thrace, he at length arrived, after many perilous adventures and hair-breadth escapes, at Mycenae, where he delivered them up to Eurystheus, who sacrificed them to Hera.

Heracles had now executed his ten tasks, which had been accomplished in the space of eight years; but Eurystheus refused to include the slaying of the Hydra and the cleansing of the stables of Augeas among the number, alleging as a reason that the one had been performed by the assistance of Iolaus, and that the other had been executed for hire. He therefore insisted on Heracles substituting two more labours in their place.

## The Apples of the Hesperides

The eleventh task imposed by Eurystheus was to bring him the golden apples of the Hesperides, which grew on a tree presented by Gaea to Hera, on the occasion of her marriage with Zeus. This sacred tree was guarded by four maidens, daughters of Night, called the Hesperides, who were assisted in their task by a terrible hundred-headed dragon. This dragon never slept, and out of its hundred throats came a constant hissing sound, which effectually warned off all intruders. But what rendered the undertaking still more difficult was the complete ignorance of the hero as to the locality of the garden, and he was forced, in consequence, to make many fruitless journeys and to undergo many trials before he could find it.

He first travelled through Thessaly and arrived at the river Echedorus, where he met the giant Cycnus, the son of Ares and Pyrene, who challenged him to single combat. In this encounter Heracles completely vanquished his opponent, who was killed in the contest; but now a mightier adversary appeared on the scene, for the war-god himself came to

avenge his son. A terrible struggle ensued, which had lasted some time, when Zeus interfered between the brothers, and put an end to the strife by hurling a thunderbolt between them. Heracles proceeded on his journey, and reached the banks of the river Eridanus, where dwelt the Nymphs, daughters of Zeus and Themis. On seeking advice from them as to his route, they directed him to the old sea-god Nereus, who alone knew the way to the Garden of the Hesperides. Heracles found him asleep, and seizing the opportunity, held him so firmly in his powerful grasp that he could not possibly escape, so that notwithstanding his various metamorphoses he was at last compelled to give the information required. The hero then crossed over to Libya, where he engaged in a wrestling-match with king Anteos, son of Poseidon and Gaea, which terminated fatally for his antagonist.

From thence he proceeded to Egypt, where reigned Busiris, another son of Poseidon, who (acting on the advice given by an oracle during a time of great scarcity) sacrificed all strangers to Zeus. When Heracles arrived he was seized and dragged to the altar; but the powerful demi-god burst asunder his bonds, and then slew Busiris and his son.

Resuming his journey he now wandered on through Arabia until he arrived at Mount Caucasus, where Prometheus groaned in unceasing agony. It was at this time that Heracles (as already related) shot the eagle which had so long tortured the noble and devoted friend of mankind. Full of gratitude for his deliverance, Prometheus instructed him how to find his way to that remote region in the far West where Atlas supported the heavens on his shoulders, near which lay the Garden of the Hesperides. He also warned Heracles not to attempt to secure the precious fruit himself, but to assume for a time the duties of Atlas, and to despatch him for the apples.

On arriving at his destination Heracles followed the advice of Prometheus. Atlas, who willingly entered into the arrangement, contrived to put the dragon to sleep, and then, having cunningly outwitted the Hesperides, carried off three of the golden apples, which he now brought to Heracles. But when the latter was prepared to relinquish his burden, Atlas, having once tasted the delights of freedom, declined to resume his post, and announced his intention of being himself the bearer of the apples to Eurystheus, leaving Heracles to fill his place. To this proposal the hero

feigned assent, merely begging that Atlas would be kind enough to support the heavens for a few moments whilst he contrived a pad for his head. Atlas good-naturedly threw down the apples and once more resumed his load, upon which Heracles bade him adieu, and departed.

When Heracles conveyed the golden apples to Eurystheus the latter presented them to the hero, whereupon Heracles placed the sacred fruit on the altar of Pallas-Athene, who restored them to the garden of the Hesperides.

## Cerberus

The twelfth and last labour which Eurystheus imposed on Heracles was to bring up Cerberus from the lower world, believing that all his heroic powers would be unavailing in the Realm of Shades, and that in this, his last and most perilous undertaking, the hero must at length succumb and perish.

Cerberus was a monster dog with three heads, out of whose awful jaws dripped poison; the hair of his head and back was formed of venomous snakes, and his body terminated in the tail of a dragon.

After being initiated into the Eleusinian Mysteries, and obtaining from the priests certain information necessary for the accomplishment of his task, Heracles set out for Taenarum in Lacolia, where there was an opening which led to the under-world. Conducted by Hermes, he commenced his descent into the awful gulf, where myriads of shades soon began to appear, all of whom fled in terror at his approach, Meleager and Medusa alone excepted. About to strike the latter with his sword, Hermes interfered and stayed his hand, reminding him that she was but a shadow, and that consequently no weapon could avail against her.

Arrived before the gates of Hades he found Theseus and Pirithöus, who had been fixed to an enchanted rock by Hades for their presumption in endeavouring to carry off Persephone. When they saw Heracles they implored him to set them free. The hero succeeded in delivering Theseus, but when he endeavoured to liberate Pirithöus, the earth shook so violently beneath him that he was compelled to relinquish his task.

Proceeding further Heracles recognized Ascalaphus, who, as we have seen in the history of Demeter, had revealed the fact that Persephone had swallowed the seeds of a pomegranate offered to her by her husband,

which bound her to Hades for ever. Ascalaphus was groaning beneath a huge rock which Demeter in her anger had hurled upon him, and which Heracles now removed, releasing the sufferer.

Before the gates of his palace stood Hades the mighty ruler of the lower world, and barred his entrance; but Heracles, aiming at him with one of his unerring darts, shot him in the shoulder, so that for the first time the god experienced the agony of mortal suffering. Heracles then demanded of him permission to take Cerberus to the upper-world, and to this Hades consented on condition that he should secure him unarmed. Protected by his breastplate and lion’s skin Heracles went in search of the monster, whom he found at the mouth of the river Acheron. Undismayed by the hideous barking which proceeded from his three heads, he seized the throat with one hand and the legs with the other, and although the dragon which served him as a tail bit him severely, he did not relinquish his grasp. In this manner he conducted him to the upper-world, through an opening near Troezen in Argolia.

When Eurystheus beheld Cerberus he stood aghast, and despairing of ever getting rid of his hated rival, he returned the hell-hound to the hero, who restored him to Hades, and with this last task the subjection of Heracles to Eurystheus terminated.

# Heracles’ Freedom

**FREE AT LAST** Heracles now returned to Thebes; and it being impossible for him to live happily with Megara in consequence of his having murdered her children he, with her own consent, gave her in marriage to his nephew Iolaus. Heracles himself sought the hand of Iole, daughter of Eurytus, king of Oechalia, who had instructed him when a boy in the use of the bow. Hearing that this king had promised to give his daughter to him who could surpass himself and his three sons in shooting with the bow, Heracles lost no time in presenting himself as a competitor. He soon proved that he was no unworthy pupil of Eurytus, for he signally defeated all his opponents. But although the king treated him with marked respect and honour he refused, nevertheless, to give him the hand of his daughter, fearing for her a similar fate to that which had befallen Megara. Iphitus, the eldest son of Eurytus, alone espoused the cause of Heracles, and essayed to induce his father to give his consent to the marriage; but all to no purpose, and at length, stung to the quick at his rejection, the hero angrily took his departure.

Soon afterwards the oxen of the king were stolen by the notorious thief Autolycus, and Heracles was suspected by Eurytus of having committed the theft. But Iphitus loyally defended his absent friend, and proposed to seek out Heracles, and with his assistance to go in search of the missing cattle.

The hero warmly welcomed his staunch young friend, and entered cordially into his plan. They at once set out on their expedition; but their search proved altogether unsuccessful. When they approached the city of Tiryns they mounted a tower in hopes of discovering the missing herd in the surrounding country; but as they stood on the topmost summit of the building, Heracles became suddenly seized with one of his former attacks of madness, and mistaking his friend Iphitus for an enemy, hurled him down into the plain below, and he was killed on the spot.

Heracles now set forth on a weary pilgrimage, begging in vain that someone would purify him from the murder of Iphitus. It was during these

wanderings that he arrived at the palace of his friend Admetus, whose beautiful and heroic wife (Alcestes) he restored to her husband after a terrible struggle with Death, as already related.

Soon after this event Heracles was struck with a fearful disease, and betook himself to the temple of Delphi, hoping to obtain from the oracle the means of relief. The priestess, however, refused him a response on the ground of his having murdered Iphitus, whereupon the angry hero seized upon the tripod, which he carried off, declaring that he would construct an oracle for himself. Apollo, who witnessed the sacrilege, came down to defend his sanctuary, and a violent struggle ensued. Zeus once more interfered, and, flashing his lightnings between his two favourite sons, ended the combat. The Pythia now vouchsafed an answer to the prayer of the hero, and commanded him, in expiation of his crime, to allow himself to be sold by Hermes for three years as a slave, the purchase-money to be given to Eurytus in compensation for the loss of his son.

Heracles bowed in submission to the divine will, and was conducted by Hermes to Omphale, queen of Lydia. The three talents which she paid for him were given to Eurytus, who, however, declined to accept the money, which was handed over to the children of Iphitus.

Heracles now regained his former vigour. He rid the territory of Omphale of the robbers which infested it and performed for her various other services requiring strength and courage.

When Omphale learned that her slave was none other than the renowned Heracles himself she at once gave him his liberty, and offered him her hand and kingdom. In her palace Heracles abandoned himself to all the enervating luxuries of an oriental life, and so completely was the great hero enthralled by the fascination which his mistress exercised over him, that whilst she playfully donned his lion’s skin and helmet, he, attired in female garments, sat at her feet spinning wool, and beguiling the time by the relation of his past adventures.

But when at length, his term of bondage having expired, he became master of his own actions, the manly and energetic spirit of the hero reasserted itself, and tearing himself away from the palace of the Maeonian queen, he determined to carry out the revenge he had so long meditated against the treacherous Laomedon and the faithless Augeas.

Gathering round him some of his old brave companions-in-arms, Heracles collected a fleet of vessels and set sail for Troy, where he landed, took the city by storm, and killed Laomedon, who thus met at length the retribution he had so richly deserved.

To Telamon, one of his bravest followers, he gave Hesione, the daughter of the king, in marriage. When Heracles gave her permission to release one of the prisoners of war she chose her own brother Podarces, whereupon she was informed that as he was already a prisoner of war she would be compelled to ransom him. On hearing this Hesione took off her golden diadem, which she joyfully handed to the hero. Owing to this circumstance Podarces henceforth bore the name of Priamus (or Priam), which signifies the ‘ransomed one.’

Heracles now marched against Augeas to execute his vengeance on him also for his perfidious conduct. He stormed the city of Elis and put to death Augeas and his sons, sparing only his brave advocate and staunch defender Phyleus, on whom he bestowed the vacant throne of his father.

Heracles now proceeded to Calydon, where he wooed the beautiful Deianeira, daughter of Oeneus, king of Aetolia; but he encountered a formidable rival in Achelous, the river-god, and it was agreed that their claims should be decided by single combat. Trusting to his power of assuming various forms at will, Achelous felt confident of success; but this availed him nothing, for having at last transformed himself into a bull, his mighty adversary broke off one of his horns, and compelled him to acknowledge himself defeated.

After passing three happy years with Deianeira an unfortunate accident occurred, which for a time marred their felicity. Heracles was one day present at a banquet given by Oeneus, when, by a sudden swing of his hand, he had the misfortune to strike on the head a youth of noble birth, who, according to the custom of the ancients, was serving the guests at table, and so violent was the blow that it caused his death. The father of the unfortunate youth, who had witnessed the occurrence, saw that it was the result of accident, and therefore absolved the hero from blame. But Heracles resolved to act according to the law of the land, banished himself from the country, and bidding farewell to his father-in-law, set out for Trachin to visit his friend King Ceyx, taking with him his wife Deianeira, and his young son Hyllus.

In the course of their journey they arrived at the river Evenus, over which the Centaur Nessus was in the habit of carrying travellers for hire. Heracles, with his little son in his arms, forded the stream unaided, entrusting his wife to the care of the Centaur, who, charmed with the beauty of his fair burden, attempted to carry her off. But her cries were heard by her husband, who without hesitation shot Nessus through the heart with one of his poisoned arrows. Now the dying Centaur was thirsting for revenge. He called Deianeira to his side, and directed her to secure some of the blood which flowed from his wound, assuring her that if, when in danger of losing her husband's affection, she used it in the manner indicated by him, it would act as a charm, and prevent her from being supplanted by a rival. Heracles and Deianeira now pursued their journey, and after several adventures at length arrived at their destination.

# The Death of Heracles

**THE LAST EXPEDITION** undertaken by the great hero was against Eurytus, king of Oechalia, to revenge himself upon this king and his sons for having refused to bestow upon him the hand of Iole, after having fairly won the maiden. Having collected a large army Heracles set out for Euboea in order to besiege Oechalia, its capital. Success crowned his arms. He stormed the citadel, slew the king and his three sons, reduced the town to ashes, and carried away captive the young and beautiful Iole.

Returning from his victorious expedition, Heracles halted at Cenoeus in order to offer a sacrifice to Zeus, and sent to Deianeira to Trachin for a sacrificial robe. Deianeira having been informed that the fair Iole was in the train of Heracles was fearful lest her youthful charms might supplant her in the affection of her husband, and calling to mind the advice of the dying Centaur, she determined to test the efficacy of the love-charm which he had given to her. Taking out the phial which she had carefully preserved, she imbued the robe with a portion of the liquid which it contained, and then sent it to Heracles.

The victorious hero clothed himself with the garment, and was about to perform the sacrifice, when the hot flames rising from the altar heated the poison with which it was imbued, and soon every fibre of his body was penetrated by the deadly venom. The unfortunate hero, suffering the most fearful tortures, endeavoured to tear off the robe, but it adhered so closely to the skin that all his efforts to remove it only increased his agonies.

In this pitiable condition he was conveyed to Trachin, where Deianeira, on beholding the terrible suffering of which she was the innocent cause, was overcome with grief and remorse, and hanged herself in despair. The dying hero called his son Hyllus to his side, and desired him to make Iole his wife, and then ordering his followers to erect a funeral pyre, he mounted it and implored the by-standers to set fire to it, and thus in mercy to terminate his insufferable torments. But no one had the courage to obey him, until at last his friend and companion Philoctetes, yielding to his

piteous appeal, lighted the pile, and received in return the bow and arrows of the hero.

Soon flames on flames ascended, and amidst vivid flashes of lightning, accompanied by awful peals of thunder, Pallas-Athene descended in a cloud, and bore her favourite hero in a chariot to Olympus.

Heracles became admitted among the immortals; and Hera, in token of her reconciliation, bestowed upon him the hand of her beautiful daughter Hebe, the goddess of eternal youth.

# The Heraclidae

**AFTER THE APOTHEOSIS** of Heracles, his children were so cruelly persecuted by Eurystheus, that they fled for protection to king Ceyx at Trachin, accompanied by the aged Iolaus, the nephew and life-long friend of their father, who constituted himself their guide and protector. But on Eurystheus demanding the surrender of the fugitives, the Heraclidae, knowing that the small force at the disposal of king Ceyx would be altogether inadequate to protect them against the powerful king of Argos, abandoned his territory, and sought refuge at Athens, where they were hospitably received by king Demophoon, the son of the great hero Theseus. He warmly espoused their cause, and determined to protect them at all costs against Eurystheus, who had despatched a numerous force in pursuit of them.

When the Athenians had made all necessary preparations to repel the invaders, an oracle announced that the sacrifice of a maiden of noble birth was necessary to ensure to them victory; whereupon Macaria, the beautiful daughter of Heracles and Deianira, magnanimously offered herself as a sacrifice, and, surrounded by the noblest matrons and maidens of Athens, voluntarily devoted herself to death.

While these events were transpiring in Athens, Hyllus, the eldest son of Heracles and Deianira, had advanced with a large army to the assistance of his brothers, and having sent a messenger to the king announcing his arrival, Demophoon, with his army, joined his forces.

In the thick of the battle which ensued, Iolaus, following a sudden impulse, borrowed the chariot of Hyllus, and earnestly entreated Zeus and Hebe to restore to him, for this one day only, the vigour and strength of his youth. His prayer was heard. A thick cloud descended from heaven and enveloped the chariot, and when it disappeared, Iolaus, in the full plenitude of manly vigour, stood revealed before the astonished gaze of the combatants. He then led on his valiant band of warriors, and soon the enemy was in headlong flight; and Eurystheus, who was taken prisoner, was put to death by the command of king Demophoon.

After gratefully acknowledging the timely aid of the Athenians, Hyllus, accompanied by the faithful Iolaus and his brothers, took leave of king Demophoon, and proceeded to invade the Peloponnesus, which they regarded as their lawful patrimony; for, according to the will of Zeus, it should have been the rightful possession of their father, the great hero Heracles, had not Hera maliciously defeated his plans by causing his cousin Eurystheus to precede him into the world.

For the space of twelve months the Heraclidae contrived to maintain themselves in the Peloponnesus; but at the expiration of that time a pestilence broke out, which spread over the entire peninsula, and compelled the Heraclidae to evacuate the country and return to Attica, where for a time they settled.

After the lapse of three years Hyllus resolved on making another effort to obtain his paternal inheritance. Before setting out on the expedition, however, he consulted the oracle of Delphi, and the response was, that he must wait for the third fruit before the enterprise would prove successful. Interpreting this ambiguous reply to signify the third summer, Hyllus controlled his impatience for three years, when, having collected a powerful army, he once more entered the Peloponnesus.

At the isthmus of Corinth he was opposed by Atreus, the son of Pelops, who at the death of Eurystheus had inherited the kingdom. In order to save bloodshed, Hyllus offered to decide his claims by single combat, the conditions being, that if he were victorious, he and his brothers should obtain undisputed possession of their rights; but if defeated, the Heraclidae were to desist for fifty years from attempting to press their claim.

The challenge was accepted by Echemon, king of Tegea, and Hyllus lost his life in the encounter, whereupon the sons of Heracles, in virtue of their agreement, abandoned the Peloponnesus and retired to Marathon.

Hyllus was succeeded by his son Cleodaeus, who, at the expiration of the appointed time, collected a large army and invaded the Peloponnesus; but he was not more successful than his father had been, and perished there with all his forces.

Twenty years later his son Aristomachus consulted an oracle, which promised him victory if he went by way of the defile. The Heraclidae once

more set out, but were again defeated, and Aristomachus shared the fate of his father and grandfather, and fell on the field of battle.

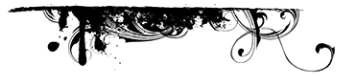
When, at the expiration of thirty years, the sons of Aristomachus, Temenus, Cresphontes, and Aristodemus again consulted the oracle, the answer was still the same; but this time the following explanation accompanied the response: the third fruit signified the third generation, to which they themselves belonged, and not the third fruit of the earth; and by the defile was indicated, not the isthmus of Corinth, but the straits on the right of the isthmus.

Temenus lost no time in collecting an army and building ships of war; but just as all was ready and the fleet about to sail, Aristodemus, the youngest of the brothers, was struck by lightning. To add to their misfortunes, Hippolytes, a descendant of Heracles, who had joined in the expedition, killed a soothsayer whom he mistook for a spy, and the gods, in their displeasure, sent violent tempests, by means of which the entire fleet was destroyed, whilst famine and pestilence decimated the ranks of the army.

The oracle, on being again consulted, advised that Hippolytes, being the offender, should be banished from the country for ten years, and that the command of the troops should be delegated to a man having three eyes. A search was at once instituted by the Heraclidae for a man answering to this description, who was found at length in the person of Oxylus, a descendant of the Aetolian race of kings. In obedience to the command of the oracle, Hippolytes was banished, an army and fleet once more equipped, and Oxylus elected commander-in-chief.

And now success at length crowned the efforts of the long-suffering descendants of the great hero. They obtained possession of the Peloponnesus, which was divided among them by lot. Argos fell to Temenus, Lacedaemon to Aristodemus, and Messene to Cresphontes. In gratitude for the services of their able leader, Oxylus, the kingdom of Elis, was conferred upon him by the Heraclidae.

# JASON AND THE ARGONAUTS



## Introduction

**IT IS FORETOLD**, “Beware of a man with one sandal.” At first glance, hardly the most chilling of prophecies. Yet in an age circumscribed by gods and heroes, when the divine and human intertwined, any such prediction had to be viewed with respect. In this case doubly so, for the prophecy referred to none other than the hero Jason, son of Aeson of Iolcus, whose deeds in pursuit of the famous Golden Fleece would ripple throughout time and legend.

# How the Centaur Trained the Heroes on Pelion

**HERE FOLLOWS** a tale of heroes who sailed away into a distant land, to win themselves renown forever, in the adventure of the Golden Fleece.

And what was that first Golden Fleece? The old Hellens said that it hung in Colchis, which we call the Circassian coast, nailed to a beech-tree in the war-God's wood; and that it was the fleece of the wondrous ram who bore Phrixus and Helle across the Euxine sea. For Phrixus and Helle were the children of the cloud-nymph, and of Athamas the Minuan king. And when a famine came upon the land, their cruel step-mother Ino wished to kill them, that her own children might reign, and said that they must be sacrificed on an altar, to turn away the anger of the Gods. So the poor children were brought to the altar, and the priest stood ready with his knife, when out of the clouds came the Golden Ram, and took them on his back, and vanished. Then madness came upon that foolish king, Athamas, and ruin upon Ino and her children. For Athamas killed one of them in his fury, and Ino fled from him with the other in her arms, and leaped from a cliff into the sea, and was changed into a dolphin, such as you have seen, which wanders over the waves for ever sighing, with its little one clasped to its breast.

But the people drove out King Athamas, because he had killed his child; and he roamed about in his misery, till he came to the Oracle in Delphi. And the Oracle told him that he must wander for his sin, till the wild beasts should feast him as their guest. So he went on in hunger and sorrow for many a weary day, till he saw a pack of wolves. The wolves were tearing a sheep; but when they saw Athamas they fled, and left the sheep for him, and he ate of it; and then he knew that the oracle was fulfilled at last. So he wandered no more; but settled, and built a town, and became a king again.

But the ram carried the two children far away over land and sea, till he came to the Thracian Chersonese, and there Helle fell into the sea. So

those narrow straits are called ‘Hellespont,’ after her; and they bear that name until this day.

Then the ram flew on with Phrixus to the north-east across the sea which we call the Black Sea now; but the Hellens call it Euxine. And at last, they say, he stopped at Colchis, on the steep Circassian coast; and there Phrixus married Chalciope, the daughter of Aeetes the king; and offered the ram in sacrifice; and Aeetes nailed the ram’s fleece to a beech, in the grove of Ares the war-God.

And after awhile Phrixus died, and was buried, but his spirit had no rest; for he was buried far from his native land, and the pleasant hills of Hellas. So he came in dreams to the heroes of the Minuai, and called sadly by their beds, “Come and set my spirit free, that I may go home to my fathers and to my kinsfolk, and the pleasant Minuan land.”

And they asked, “How shall we set your spirit free?”

“You must sail over the sea to Colchis, and bring home the golden fleece; and then my spirit will come back with it, and I shall sleep with my fathers and have rest.”

He came thus, and called to them often; but when they woke they looked at each other, and said, “Who dare sail to Colchis, or bring home the golden fleece?”

And in all the country none was brave enough to try it; for the man and the time were not come.

Phrixus had a cousin called Aeson, who was king in Iolcos by the sea. There he ruled over the rich Minuan heroes, as Athamas his uncle ruled in Boeotia; and, like Athamas, he was an unhappy man. For he had a step-brother named Pelias, of whom some said that he was a nymph’s son, and there were dark and sad tales about his birth. When he was a babe he was cast out on the mountains, and a wild mare came by and kicked him. But a shepherd passing found the baby, with its face all blackened by the blow; and took him home, and called him Pelias, because his face was bruised and black. And he grew up fierce and lawless, and did many a fearful deed; and at last he drove out Aeson his step-brother, and then his own brother Neleus, and took the kingdom to himself, and ruled over the rich Minuan heroes, in Iolcos by the sea.

And Aeson, when he was driven out, went sadly away out of the town, leading his little son by the hand; and he said to himself, “I must hide the

child in the mountains; or Pelias will surely kill him, because he is the heir.”

So he went up from the sea across the valley, through the vineyards and the olive groves, and across the torrent of Anauros, toward Pelion the ancient mountain, whose brows are white with snow.

He went up and up into the mountain, over marsh, and crag, and down, till the boy was tired and footsore, and Aeson had to bear him in his arms, till he came to the mouth of a lonely cave, at the foot of a mighty cliff.

Above the cliff the snow-wreaths hung, dripping and cracking in the sun; but at its foot around the cave’s mouth grew all fair flowers and herbs, as if in a garden, ranged in order, each sort by itself. There they grew gaily in the sunshine, and the spray of the torrent from above; while from the cave came the sound of music, and a man’s voice singing to the harp.

Then Aeson put down the lad, and whispered:

“Fear not, but go in, and whomsoever you shall find, lay your hands upon his knees, and say, ‘In the name of Zeus, the father of Gods and men, I am your guest from this day forth.’”

Then the lad went in without trembling, for he too was a hero’s son; but when he was within, he stopped in wonder to listen to that magic song.

And there he saw the singer lying upon bear-skins and fragrant boughs: Cheiron, the ancient centaur, the wisest of all things beneath the sky. Down to the waist he was a man, but below he was a noble horse; his white hair rolled down over his broad shoulders, and his white beard over his broad brown chest; and his eyes were wise and mild, and his forehead like a mountain-wall.

And in his hands he held a harp of gold, and struck it with a golden key; and as he struck, he sang till his eyes glittered, and filled all the cave with light.

And he sang of the birth of Time, and of the heavens and the dancing stars; and of the ocean, and the ether, and the fire, and the shaping of the wondrous earth. And he sang of the treasures of the hills, and the hidden jewels of the mine, and the veins of fire and metal, and the virtues of all healing herbs, and of the speech of birds, and of prophecy, and of hidden things to come.

Then he sang of health, and strength, and manhood, and a valiant heart; and of music, and hunting, and wrestling, and all the games which heroes

love: and of travel, and wars, and sieges, and a noble death in fight; and then he sang of peace and plenty, and of equal justice in the land; and as he sang the boy listened wide-eyed, and forgot his errand in the song.

And at the last old Cheiron was silent, and called the lad with a soft voice.

And the lad ran trembling to him, and would have laid his hands upon his knees; but Cheiron smiled, and said, “Call hither your father Aeson, for I know you, and all that has befallen, and saw you both afar in the valley, even before you left the town.”

Then Aeson came in sadly, and Cheiron asked him, “Why camest you not yourself to me, Aeson the Aeolid?”

And Aeson said:

“I thought, Cheiron will pity the lad if he sees him come alone; and I wished to try whether he was fearless, and dare venture like a hero’s son. But now I entreat you by Father Zeus, let the boy be your guest till better times, and train him among the sons of the heroes, that he may avenge his father’s house.”

Then Cheiron smiled, and drew the lad to him, and laid his hand upon his golden locks, and said, “Are you afraid of my horse’s hoofs, fair boy, or will you be my pupil from this day?”

“I would gladly have horse’s hoofs like you, if I could sing such songs as yours.”

And Cheiron laughed, and said, “Sit here by me till sundown, when your playfellows will come home, and you shall learn like them to be a king, worthy to rule over gallant men.”

Then he turned to Aeson, and said, “Go back in peace, and bend before the storm like a prudent man. This boy shall not cross the Anauros again, till he has become a glory to you and to the house of Aeolus.”

And Aeson wept over his son and went away; but the boy did not weep, so full was his fancy of that strange cave, and the centaur, and his song, and the playfellows whom he was to see.

Then Cheiron put the lyre into his hands, and taught him how to play it, till the sun sank low behind the cliff, and a shout was heard outside.

And then in came the sons of the heroes, Aeneas, and Heracles, and Peleus, and many another mighty name.

And great Cheiron leapt up joyfully, and his hoofs made the cave resound, as they shouted, “Come out, Father Cheiron; come out and see our game.”

And one cried, “I have killed two deer;” and another, “I took a wild cat among the crags;” and Heracles dragged a wild goat after him by its horns, for he was as huge as a mountain crag; and Coeneus carried a bear-cub under each arm, and laughed when they scratched and bit, for neither tooth nor steel could wound him.

And Cheiron praised them all, each according to his deserts.

Only one walked apart and silent, Asclepius, the too-wise child, with his bosom full of herbs and flowers, and round his wrist a spotted snake; he came with downcast eyes to Cheiron, and whispered how he had watched the snake cast its old skin, and grow young again before his eyes, and how he had gone down into a village in the vale, and cured a dying man with a herb which he had seen a sick goat eat.

And Cheiron smiled, and said, “To each Athene and Apollo give some gift, and each is worthy in his place; but to this child they have given an honour beyond all honours, to cure while others kill.”

Then the lads brought in wood, and split it, and lighted a blazing fire; and others skinned the deer and quartered them, and set them to roast before the fire; and while the venison was cooking they bathed in the snow-torrent, and washed away the dust and sweat.

And then all ate till they could eat no more (for they had tasted nothing since the dawn), and drank of the clear spring water, for wine is not fit for growing lads. And when the remnants were put away, they all lay down upon the skins and leaves about the fire, and each took the lyre in turn, and sang and played with all his heart.

And after a while they all went out to a plot of grass at the cave’s mouth, and there they boxed, and ran, and wrestled, and laughed till the stones fell from the cliffs.

Then Cheiron took his lyre, and all the lads joined hands; and as be played, they danced to his measure, in and out, and round and round. There they danced hand in hand, till the night fell over land and sea, while the black glen shone with their broad white limbs and the gleam of their golden hair.

And the lad danced with them, delighted, and then slept a wholesome sleep, upon fragrant leaves of bay, and myrtle, and marjoram, and flowers of thyme; and rose at the dawn, and bathed in the torrent, and became a schoolfellow to the heroes' sons, and forgot Iolcos, and his father, and all his former life. But he grew strong, and brave and cunning, upon the pleasant downs of Pelion, in the keen hungry mountain air. And he learnt to wrestle, and to box, and to hunt, and to play upon the harp; and next he learnt to ride, for old Cheiron used to mount him on his back; and he learnt the virtues of all herbs and how to cure all wounds; and Cheiron called him Jason the healer, and that is his name until this day.

# How Jason Lost His Sandal in Anauros

**AND TEN YEARS** came and went, and Jason was grown to be a mighty man. Some of his fellows were gone, and some were growing up by his side. Asclepius was gone into Peloponnese to work his wondrous cures on men; and some say he used to raise the dead to life. And Heracles was gone to Thebes to fulfil those famous labours which have become a proverb among men. And Peleus had married a sea-nymph, and his wedding is famous to this day. And Aeneas was gone home to Troy, and many a noble tale you will read of him, and of all the other gallant heroes, the scholars of Cheiron the just. And it happened on a day that Jason stood on the mountain, and looked north and south and east and west; and Cheiron stood by him and watched him, for he knew that the time was come.

And Jason looked and saw the plains of Thessaly, where the Lapithai breed their horses; and the lake of Boibé, and the stream which runs northward to Peneus and Tempe; and he looked north, and saw the mountain wall which guards the Magnesian shore; Olympus, the seat of the Immortals, and Ossa, and Pelion, where he stood. Then he looked east and saw the bright blue sea, which stretched away for ever toward the dawn. Then he looked south, and saw a pleasant land, with white-walled towns and farms, nestling along the shore of a land-locked bay, while the smoke rose blue among the trees; and he knew it for the bay of Pagasai, and the rich lowlands of Haemonia, and Iolcos by the sea.

Then he sighed, and asked, ‘Is it true what the heroes tell me – that I am heir of that fair land?’

“And what good would it be to you, Jason, if you were heir of that fair land?”

“I would take it and keep it.”

“A strong man has taken it and kept it long. Are you stronger than Pelias the terrible?”

“I can try my strength with his,” said Jason; but Cheiron sighed, and said:

“You have many a danger to go through before you rule in Iolcos by the sea: many a danger and many a woe; and strange troubles in strange lands, such as man never saw before.”

“The happier I,” said Jason, “to see what man never saw before.”

And Cheiron sighed again, and said, “The eaglet must leave the nest when it is fledged. Will you go to Iolcos by the sea? Then promise me two things before you go.”

Jason promised, and Cheiron answered, “Speak harshly to no soul whom you may meet, and stand by the word which you shall speak.”

Jason wondered why Cheiron asked this of him; but he knew that the Centaur was a prophet, and saw things long before they came. So he promised, and leapt down the mountain, to take his fortune like a man.

He went down through the arbutus thickets, and across the downs of thyme, till he came to the vineyard walls, and the pomegranates and the olives in the glen; and among the olives roared Anauros, all foaming with a summer flood.

And on the bank of Anauros sat a woman, all wrinkled, grey, and old; her head shook palsied on her breast, and her hands shook palsied on her knees; and when she saw Jason, she spoke whining, “Who will carry me across the flood?”

Jason was bold and hasty, and was just going to leap into the flood: and yet he thought twice before he leapt, so loud roared the torrent down, all brown from the mountain rains, and silver-veined with melting snow; while underneath he could hear the boulders rumbling like the tramp of horsemen or the roll of wheels, as they ground along the narrow channel, and shook the rocks on which he stood.

But the old woman whined all the more, “I am weak and old, fair youth. For Hera’s sake, carry me over the torrent.”

And Jason was going to answer her scornfully, when Cheiron’s words came to his mind.

So he said, “For Hera’s sake, the Queen of the Immortals on Olympus, I will carry you over the torrent, unless we both are drowned midway.”

Then the old dame leapt upon his back, as nimbly as a goat; and Jason staggered in, wondering; and the first step was up to his knees.

The first step was up to his knees, and the second step was up to his waist; and the stones rolled about his feet, and his feet slipped about the

stones; so he went on staggering, and panting, while the old woman cried from off his back:

"Fool, you have wet my mantle! Do you make game of poor old souls like me?"

Jason had half a mind to drop her, and let her get through the torrent by herself; but Cheiron's words were in his mind, and he said only, "Patience, mother; the best horse may stumble some day."

At last he staggered to the shore, and set her down upon the bank; and a strong man he needed to have been, or that wild water he never would have crossed.

He lay panting awhile upon the bank, and then leapt up to go upon his journey; but he cast one look at the old woman, for he thought, "She should thank me once at least."

And as he looked, she grew fairer than all women, and taller than all men on earth; and her garments shone like the summer sea, and her jewels like the stars of heaven; and over her forehead was a veil woven of the golden clouds of sunset; and through the veil she looked down on him, with great soft heifer's eyes; with great eyes, mild and awful, which filled all the glen with light.

And Jason fell upon his knees, and hid his face between his hands.

And she spoke, "I am the Queen of Olympus, Hera the wife of Zeus. As thou hast done to me, so will I do to thee. Call on me in the hour of need, and try if the Immortals can forget."

And when Jason looked up, she rose from off the earth, like a pillar of tall white cloud, and floated away across the mountain peaks, toward Olympus the holy hill.

Then a great fear fell on Jason: but after a while he grew light of heart; and he blessed old Cheiron, and said, "Surely the Centaur is a prophet, and guessed what would come to pass, when he bade me speak harshly to no soul whom I might meet."

Then he went down toward Iolcos; and as he walked he found that he had lost one of his sandals in the flood.

And as he went through the streets, the people came out to look at him, so tall and fair was he; but some of the elders whispered together; and at last one of them stopped Jason, and called to him, "Fair lad, who are you, and whence come you; and what is your errand in the town?"

“My name, good father, is Jason, and I come from Pelion up above; and my errand is to Pelias your king; tell me then where his palace is.”

But the old man started, and grew pale, and said, “Do you not know the oracle, my son, that you go so boldly through the town with but one sandal on?”

“I am a stranger here, and know of no oracle; but what of my one sandal? I lost the other in Anauros, while I was struggling with the flood.”

Then the old man looked back to his companions; and one sighed, and another smiled; at last he said, “I will tell you, lest you rush upon your ruin unawares. The oracle in Delphi has said that a man wearing one sandal should take the kingdom from Pelias, and keep it for himself. Therefore beware how you go up to his palace, for he is the fiercest and most cunning of all kings.”

Then Jason laughed a great laugh, like a war-horse in his pride. “Good news, good father, both for you and me. For that very end I came into the town.”

Then he strode on toward the palace of Pelias, while all the people wondered at his bearing.

And he stood in the doorway and cried, “Come out, come out, Pelias the valiant, and fight for your kingdom like a man.”

Pelias came out wondering, and “Who are you, bold youth?” he cried.

“I am Jason, the son of Aeson, the heir of all this land.”

Then Pelias lifted up his hands and eyes, and wept, or seemed to weep; and blessed the heavens which had brought his nephew to him, never to leave him more.

“For,” said he, “I have but three daughters, and no son to be my heir. You shall be my heir then, and rule the kingdom after me, and marry whichsoever of my daughters you shall choose; though a sad kingdom you will find it, and whosoever rules it a miserable man. But come in, come in, and feast.”

So he drew Jason in, whether he would or not, and spoke to him so lovingly and feasted him so well, that Jason’s anger passed; and after supper his three cousins came into the hall, and Jason thought that he should like well enough to have one of them for his wife.

But at last he said to Pelias, “Why do you look so sad, my uncle? And what did you mean just now when you said that this was a doleful

kingdom, and its ruler a miserable man?”

Then Pelias sighed heavily again and again and again, like a man who had to tell some dreadful story, and was afraid to begin; but at last:

“For seven long years and more have I never known a quiet night; and no more will he who comes after me, till the golden fleece be brought home.”

Then he told Jason the story of Phrixus, and of the golden fleece; and told him, too, which was a lie, that Phrixus’ spirit tormented him, calling to him day and night. And his daughters came, and told the same tale (for their father had taught them their parts), and wept, and said, “Oh who will bring home the golden fleece, that our uncle’s spirit may rest; and that we may have rest also, whom he never lets sleep in peace?”

Jason sat awhile, sad and silent; for he had often heard of that golden fleece; but he looked on it as a thing hopeless and impossible for any mortal man to win it.

But when Pelias saw him silent, he began to talk of other things, and courted Jason more and more, speaking to him as if he was certain to be his heir, and asking his advice about the kingdom; till Jason, who was young and simple, could not help saying to himself, “Surely he is not the dark man whom people call him. Yet why did he drive my father out?” And he asked Pelias boldly, “Men say that you are terrible, and a man of blood; but I find you a kind and hospitable man; and as you are to me, so will I be to you. Yet why did you drive my father out?”

Pelias smiled, and sighed. “Men have slandered me in that, as in all things. Your father was growing old and weary, and he gave the kingdom up to me of his own will. You shall see him tomorrow, and ask him; and he will tell you the same.”

Jason’s heart leapt in him when he heard that he was to see his father; and he believed all that Pelias said, forgetting that his father might not dare to tell the truth.

“One thing more there is,” said Pelias, “on which I need your advice; for, though you are young, I see in you a wisdom beyond your years. There is one neighbour of mine, whom I dread more than all men on earth. I am stronger than he now, and can command him; but I know that if he stay among us, he will work my ruin in the end. Can you give me a plan, Jason, by which I can rid myself of that man?”

After awhile Jason answered, half laughing, “Were I you, I would send him to fetch that same golden fleece; for if he once set forth after it you would never be troubled with him more.”

And at that a bitter smile came across Pelias’ lips, and a flash of wicked joy into his eyes; and Jason saw it, and started; and over his mind came the warning of the old man, and his own one sandal, and the oracle, and he saw that he was taken in a trap.

But Pelias only answered gently, “My son, he shall be sent forthwith.”

“You mean me?” cried Jason, starting up, “Because I came here with one sandal?” And he lifted his fist angrily, while Pelias stood up to him like a wolf at bay; and whether of the two was the stronger and the fiercer it would be hard to tell.

But after a moment Pelias spoke gently, “Why then so rash, my son? You, and not I, have said what is said; why blame me for what I have not done? Had you bid me love the man of whom I spoke, and make him my son-in-law and heir, I would have obeyed you; and what if I obey you now, and send the man to win himself immortal fame? I have not harmed you, or him. One thing at least I know, that he will go, and that gladly; for he has a hero’s heart within him, loving glory, and scorning to break the word which he has given.”

Jason saw that he was entrapped; but his second promise to Cheiron came into his mind, and he thought, “What if the Centaur were a prophet in that also, and meant that I should win the fleece!” Then he cried aloud:

“You have well spoken, cunning uncle of mine! I love glory, and I dare keep to my word. I will go and fetch this golden fleece. Promise me but this in return, and keep your word as I keep mine. Treat my father lovingly while I am gone, for the sake of the all-seeing Zeus; and give me up the kingdom for my own on the day that I bring back the golden fleece.”

Then Pelias looked at him and almost loved him, in the midst of all his hate; and said, “I promise, and I will perform. It will be no shame to give up my kingdom to the man who wins that fleece.” Then they swore a great oath between them; and afterwards both went in, and lay down to sleep.

But Jason could not sleep for thinking of his mighty oath, and how he was to fulfil it, all alone, and without wealth or friends. So he tossed a long time upon his bed, and thought of this plan and of that; and sometimes Phrixus seemed to call him, in a thin voice, faint and low, as if

it came from far across the sea, “Let me come home to my fathers and have rest.” And sometimes he seemed to see the eyes of Hera, and to hear her words again: “Call on me in the hour of need, and see if the Immortals can forget.”

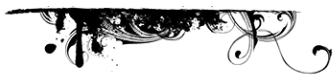
And on the morrow he went to Pelias, and said, “Give me a victim, that I may sacrifice to Hera.”

So he went up, and offered his sacrifice; and as he stood by the altar Hera sent a thought into his mind; and he went back to Pelias, and said:

“If you are indeed in earnest, give me two heralds, that they may go round to all the princes of the Minuai, who were pupils of the Centaur with me, that we may fit out a ship together, and take what shall befall.”

At that Pelias praised his wisdom, and hastened to send the heralds out; for he said in his heart, “Let all the princes go with him, and, like him, never return; for so I shall be lord of all the Minuai, and the greatest king in Hellas.”

# How They Built the Ship Argo in Iolcos



**SO THE HERALDS** went out, and cried to all the heroes of the Minuai, “Who dare come to the adventure of the golden fleece?”

And Hera stirred the hearts of all the princes, and they came from all their valleys to the yellow sands of Pagasai. And first came Heracles the mighty, with his lion’s skin and club, and behind him Hylas his young squire, who bore his arrows and his bow; and Tiphys, the skilful steersman; and Butes, the fairest of all men; and Castor and Polydeuces the twins, the sons of the magic swan; and Caeneus, the strongest of mortals, whom the Centaurs tried in vain to kill, and overwhelmed him with trunks of pine-trees, but even so he would not die; and thither came Zetes and Calais, the winged sons of the north wind; and Peleus, the father of Achilles, whose bride was silver-footed Thetis, the goddess of the sea. And thither came Telamon and Oileus, the fathers of the two Aiantes, who fought upon the plains of Troy; and Mopsus, the wise soothsayer, who knew the speech of birds; and Idmon, to whom Phoebus gave a tongue to prophesy of things to come; and Ancaios, who could read the stars, and knew all the circles of the heavens; and Argus, the famed shipbuilder, and many a hero more, in helmets of brass and gold with tall dyed horse-hair crests, and embroidered shirts of linen beneath their coats of mail, and greaves of polished tin to guard their knees in fight; with each man his shield upon his shoulder, of many a fold of tough bull’s hide, and his sword of tempered bronze in his silver-studded belt; and in his right hand a pair of lances, of the heavy white ash-staves.

So they came down to Iolcos, and all the city came out to meet them, and were never tired with looking at their height, and their beauty, and their gallant bearing and the glitter of their inlaid arms. And some said, “Never was such a gathering of the heroes since the Hellens conquered the land.” But the women sighed over them, and whispered, “Alas! they are all going to their death!”

Then they felled the pines on Pelion, and shaped them with the axe, and Argus taught them to build a galley, the first long ship which ever sailed

the seas. They pierced her for fifty oars – an oar for each hero of the crew – and pitched her with coal-black pitch, and painted her bows with vermilion; and they named her *Argo* after Argus, and worked at her all day long. And at night Pelias feasted them like a king, and they slept in his palace-porch.

But Jason went away to the northward, and into the land of Thrace, till he found Orpheus, the prince of minstrels, where he dwelt in his cave under Rhodope, among the savage Cicon tribes. And he asked him, "Will you leave your mountains, Orpheus, my fellow-scholar in old times, and cross Strymon once more with me, to sail with the heroes of the Minuai, and bring home the golden fleece, and charm for us all men and all monsters with your magic harp and song?"

Then Orpheus sighed, "Have I not had enough of toil and of weary wandering, far and wide since I lived in Cheiron's cave, above Iolcos by the sea? In vain is the skill and the voice which my goddess mother gave me; in vain have I sung and laboured; in vain I went down to the dead, and charmed all the kings of Hades, to win back Eurydice my bride. For I won her, my beloved, and lost her again the same day, and wandered away in my madness, even to Egypt and the Libyan sands, and the isles of all the seas, driven on by the terrible gadfly, while I charmed in vain the hearts of men, and the savage forest beasts, and the trees, and the lifeless stones, with my magic harp and song, giving rest, but finding none. But at last Calliope my mother delivered me, and brought me home in peace; and I dwell here in the cave alone, among the savage Cicon tribes, softening their wild hearts with music and the gentle laws of Zeus. And now I must go out again, to the ends of all the earth, far away into the misty darkness, to the last wave of the Eastern Sea. But what is doomed must be, and a friend's demand obeyed; for prayers are the daughters of Zeus, and who honours them honours him."

Then Orpheus rose up sighing, and took his harp, and went over Strymon. And he led Jason to the south-west, up the banks of Haliacmon and over the spurs of Pindus, to Dodona the town of Zeus, where it stood by the side of the sacred lake, and the fountain which breathed out fire, in the darkness of the ancient oakwood, beneath the mountain of the hundred springs. And he led him to the holy oak, where the black dove settled in old times, and was changed into the priestess of Zeus, and gave oracles to

all nations round. And he bade him cut down a bough, and sacrifice to Hera and to Zeus; and they took the bough and came to Iolcos, and nailed it to the beak-head of the ship.

And at last the ship was finished, and they tried to launch her down the beach; but she was too heavy for them to move her, and her keel sank deep into the sand. Then all the heroes looked at each other blushing; but Jason spoke, and said, “Let us ask the magic bough; perhaps it can help us in our need.”

Then a voice came from the bough, and Jason heard the words it said, and bade Orpheus play upon the harp, while the heroes waited round, holding the pine-trunk rollers, to help her toward the sea.

Then Orpheus took his harp, and began his magic song: “How sweet it is to ride upon the surges, and to leap from wave to wave, while the wind sings cheerful in the cordage, and the oars flash fast among the foam! How sweet it is to roam across the ocean, and see new towns and wondrous lands, and to come home laden with treasure, and to win undying fame!”

And the good ship *Argo* heard him, and longed to be away and out at sea; till she stirred in every timber, and heaved from stem to stern, and leapt up from the sand upon the rollers, and plunged onward like a gallant horse; and the heroes fed her path with pine-trunks, till she rushed into the whispering sea.

Then they stored her well with food and water, and pulled the ladder up on board, and settled themselves each man to his oar, and kept time to Orpheus’ harp; and away across the bay they rowed southward, while the people lined the cliffs; and the women wept, while the men shouted, at the starting of that gallant crew.

# How the Argonauts Sailed to Colchis

**AND WHAT HAPPENED NEXT**, whether it be true or not, stands written in ancient songs. And grand old songs they are, written in grand old rolling verse; and they call them the Songs of Orpheus, or the Orphics, to this day. And they tell how the heroes came to Aphetai, across the bay, and waited for the south-west wind, and chose themselves a captain from their crew: and how all called for Heracles, because he was the strongest and most huge; but Heracles refused, and called for Jason, because he was the wisest of them all. So Jason was chosen captain; and Orpheus heaped a pile of wood, and slew a bull, and offered it to Hera, and called all the heroes to stand round, each man's head crowned with olive, and to strike their swords into the bull. Then he filled a golden goblet with the bull's blood, and with wheaten flour, and honey, and wine, and the bitter salt-sea water, and bade the heroes taste. So each tasted the goblet, and passed it round, and vowed an awful vow: and they vowed before the sun, and the night, and the blue-haired sea who shakes the land, to stand by Jason faithfully in the adventure of the golden fleece; and whosoever shrank back, or disobeyed, or turned traitor to his vow, then justice should minister against him, and the Erinnues who track guilty men.

Then Jason lighted the pile, and burnt the carcase of the bull; and they went to their ship and sailed eastward, like men who have a work to do; and the place from which they went was called Aphetai, the sailing-place, from that day forth. Three thousand years and more they sailed away, into the unknown Eastern seas; and great nations have come and gone since then, and many a storm has swept the earth; and many a mighty armament, to which *Argo* would be but one small boat; English and French, Turkish and Russian, have sailed those waters since; yet the fame of that small *Argo* lives for ever, and her name is become a proverb among men.

So they sailed past the Isle of Sciathos, with the Cape of Sepius on their left, and turned to the northward toward Pelion, up the long Magnesian shore. On their right hand was the open sea, and on their left old Pelion rose, while the clouds crawled round his dark pine-forests, and his caps of

summer snow. And their hearts yearned for the dear old mountain, as they thought of pleasant days gone by, and of the sports of their boyhood, and their hunting, and their schooling in the cave beneath the cliff. And at last Peleus spoke, “Let us land here, friends, and climb the dear old hill once more. We are going on a fearful journey; who knows if we shall see Pelion again? Let us go up to Cheiron our master, and ask his blessing ere we start. And I have a boy, too, with him, whom he trains as he trained me once – the son whom Thetis brought me, the silver-footed lady of the sea, whom I caught in the cave, and tamed her, though she changed her shape seven times. For she changed, as I held her, into water, and to vapour, and to burning flame, and to a rock, and to a black-maned lion, and to a tall and stately tree. But I held her and held her ever, till she took her own shape again, and led her to my father’s house, and won her for my bride. And all the rulers of Olympus came to our wedding, and the heavens and the earth rejoiced together, when an Immortal wedded mortal man. And now let me see my son; for it is not often I shall see him upon earth: famous he will be, but short-lived, and die in the flower of youth.”

So Tiphys the helmsman steered them to the shore under the crags of Pelion; and they went up through the dark pine-forests towards the Centaur’s cave.

And they came into the misty hall, beneath the snow-crowned crag; and saw the great Centaur lying, with his huge limbs spread upon the rock; and beside him stood Achilles, the child whom no steel could wound, and played upon his harp right sweetly, while Cheiron watched and smiled.

Then Cheiron leapt up and welcomed them, and kissed them every one, and set a feast before them of swine’s flesh, and venison, and good wine; and young Achilles served them, and carried the golden goblet round. And after supper all the heroes clapped their hands, and called on Orpheus to sing; but he refused, and said, “How can I, who am the younger, sing before our ancient host?” So they called on Cheiron to sing, and Achilles brought him his harp; and he began a wondrous song; a famous story of old time, of the fight between the Centaurs and the Lapithai, which you may still see carved in stone. He sang how his brothers came to ruin by their folly, when they were mad with wine; and how they and the heroes fought, with fists, and teeth, and the goblets from which they drank; and how they tore up the pine-trees in their fury, and hurled great crags of

stone, while the mountains thundered with the battle, and the land was wasted far and wide; till the Lapithai drove them from their home in the rich Thessalian plains to the lonely glens of Pindus, leaving Cheiron all alone. And the heroes praised his song right heartily; for some of them had helped in that great fight.

Then Orpheus took the lyre, and sang of Chaos, and the making of the wondrous World, and how all things sprang from Love, who could not live alone in the Abyss. And as he sang, his voice rose from the cave, above the crags, and through the tree-tops, and the glens of oak and pine. And the trees bowed their heads when they heard it, and the grey rocks cracked and rang, and the forest beasts crept near to listen, and the birds forsook their nests and hovered round. And old Cheiron claps his hands together, and beat his hoofs upon the ground, for wonder at that magic song.

Then Peleus kissed his boy, and wept over him, and they went down to the ship; and Cheiron came down with them, weeping, and kissed them one by one, and blest them, and promised to them great renown. And the heroes wept when they left him, till their great hearts could weep no more; for he was kind and just and pious, and wiser than all beasts and men. Then he went up to a cliff, and prayed for them, that they might come home safe and well; while the heroes rowed away, and watched him standing on his cliff above the sea, with his great hands raised toward heaven, and his white locks waving in the wind; and they strained their eyes to watch him to the last, for they felt that they should look on him no more.

So they rowed on over the long swell of the sea, past Olympus, the seat of the Immortals, and past the wooded bays of Athos, and Samothrace the sacred isle; and they came past Lemnos to the Hellespont, and through the narrow strait of Abydos, and so on into the Propontis, which we call Marmora now. And there they met with Cyzicus, ruling in Asia over the Dolions, who, the songs say, was the son of Aeneas, of whom you will hear many a tale some day. For Homer tells us how he fought at Troy, and Virgil how he sailed away and founded Rome; and men believed until late years that from him sprang our old British kings. Now Cyzicus, the songs say, welcomed the heroes, for his father had been one of Cheiron’s scholars; so he welcomed them, and feasted them, and stored their ship

with corn and wine, and cloaks and rugs, the songs say, and shirts, of which no doubt they stood in need.

But at night, while they lay sleeping, came down on them terrible men, who lived with the bears in the mountains, like Titans or giants in shape; for each of them had six arms, and they fought with young firs and pines. But Heracles killed them all before morn with his deadly poisoned arrows; but among them, in the darkness, he slew Cyzicus the kindly prince.

Then they got to their ship and to their oars, and Tiphys bade them cast off the hawsers and go to sea. But as he spoke a whirlwind came, and spun the *Argo* round, and twisted the hawsers together, so that no man could loose them. Then Tiphys dropped the rudder from his hand, and cried, "This comes from the Gods above." But Jason went forward, and asked counsel of the magic bough.

Then the magic bough spoke, and answered, "This is because you have slain Cyzicus your friend. You must appease his soul, or you will never leave this shore."

Jason went back sadly, and told the heroes what he had heard. And they leapt on shore, and searched till dawn; and at dawn they found the body, all rolled in dust and blood, among the corpses of those monstrous beasts. And they wept over their kind host, and laid him on a fair bed, and heaped a huge mound over him, and offered black sheep at his tomb, and Orpheus sang a magic song to him, that his spirit might have rest. And then they held games at the tomb, after the custom of those times, and Jason gave prizes to each winner. To Ancaeus he gave a golden cup, for he wrestled best of all; and to Heracles a silver one, for he was the strongest of all; and to Castor, who rode best, a golden crest; and Polydeuces the boxer had a rich carpet, and to Orpheus for his song a sandal with golden wings. But Jason himself was the best of all the archers, and the Minuai crowned him with an olive crown; and so, the songs say, the soul of good Cyzicus was appeased and the heroes went on their way in peace.

But when Cyzicus' wife heard that he was dead she died likewise of grief; and her tears became a fountain of clear water, which flows the whole year round.

Then they rowed away, the songs say, along the Mysian shore, and past the mouth of Rhindacus, till they found a pleasant bay, sheltered by the long ridges of Arganthus, and by high walls of basalt rock. And there they

ran the ship ashore upon the yellow sand, and furled the sail, and took the mast down, and lashed it in its crutch. And next they let down the ladder, and went ashore to sport and rest.

And there Heracles went away into the woods, bow in hand, to hunt wild deer; and Hylas the fair boy slipt away after him, and followed him by stealth, until he lost himself among the glens, and sat down weary to rest himself by the side of a lake; and there the water nymphs came up to look at him, and loved him, and carried him down under the lake to be their playfellow, for ever happy and young. And Heracles sought for him in vain, shouting his name till all the mountains rang; but Hylas never heard him, far down under the sparkling lake. So while Heracles wandered searching for him, a fair breeze sprang up, and Heracles was nowhere to be found; and the *Argo* sailed away, and Heracles was left behind, and never saw the noble Phasian stream.

Then the Minuai came to a doleful land, where Amycus the giant ruled, and cared nothing for the laws of Zeus, but challenged all strangers to box with him, and those whom he conquered he slew. But Polydeuces the boxer struck him a harder blow than he ever felt before, and slew him; and the Minuai went on up the Bosphorus, till they came to the city of Phineus, the fierce Bithynian king; for Zetes and Calais bade Jason land there, because they had a work to do.

And they went up from the shore toward the city, through forests white with snow; and Phineus came out to meet them with a lean and woful face, and said, “Welcome, gallant heroes, to the land of bitter blasts, the land of cold and misery; yet I will feast you as best I can.” And he led them in, and set meat before them; but before they could put their hands to their mouths, down came two fearful monsters, the like of whom man never saw; for they had the faces and the hair of fair maidens, but the wings and claws of hawks; and they snatched the meat from off the table, and flew shrieking out above the roofs.

Then Phineus beat his breast and cried, “These are the Harpies, whose names are the Whirlwind and the Swift, the daughters of Wonder and of the Amber-nymph, and they rob us night and day. They carried off the daughters of Pandareus, whom all the Gods had blest; for Aphrodite fed them on Olympus with honey and milk and wine; and Hera gave them beauty and wisdom, and Athene skill in all the arts; but when they came to

their wedding, the Harpies snatched them both away, and gave them to be slaves to the Erinnues, and live in horror all their days. And now they haunt me, and my people, and the Bosphorus, with fearful storms; and sweep away our food from off our tables, so that we starve in spite of all our wealth."

Then up rose Zetes and Calais, the winged sons of the North-wind, and said, "Do you not know us, Phineus, and these wings which grow upon our backs?" And Phineus hid his face in terror; but he answered not a word.

"Because you have been a traitor, Phineus, the Harpies haunt you night and day. Where is Cleopatra our sister, your wife, whom you keep in prison? And where are her two children, whom you blinded in your rage, at the bidding of an evil woman, and cast them out upon the rocks? Swear to us that you will right our sister, and cast out that wicked woman; and then we will free you from your plague, and drive the whirlwind maidens to the south; but if not, we will put out your eyes, as you put out the eyes of your own sons."

Then Phineus swore an oath to them, and drove out the wicked woman; and Jason took those two poor children, and cured their eyes with magic herbs.

But Zetes and Calais rose up sadly and said, "Farewell now, heroes all; farewell, our dear companions, with whom we played on Pelion in old times; for a fate is laid upon us, and our day is come at last, in which we must hunt the whirlwinds over land and sea for ever; and if we catch them they die, and if not, we die ourselves."

At that all the heroes wept; but the two young men sprang up, and aloft into the air after the Harpies, and the battle of the winds began.

The heroes trembled in silence as they heard the shrieking of the blasts; while the palace rocked and all the city, and great stones were torn from the crags, and the forest pines were hurled earthward, north and south and east and west, and the Bosphorus boiled white with foam, and the clouds were dashed against the cliffs.

But at last the battle ended, and the Harpies fled screaming toward the south, and the sons of the North-wind rushed after them, and brought clear sunshine where they passed. For many a league they followed them, over all the isles of the Cyclades, and away to the south-west across Hellas, till they came to the Ionian Sea, and there they fell upon the Echinades, at the

mouth of the Achelous; and those isles were called the Whirlwind Isles for many a hundred years. But what became of Zetes and Calais I know not, for the heroes never saw them again: and some say that Heracles met them, and quarrelled with them, and slew them with his arrows; and some say that they fell down from weariness and the heat of the summer sun, and that the Sun-god buried them among the Cyclades, in the pleasant Isle of Tenos; and for many hundred years their grave was shown there, and over it a pillar, which turned to every wind. But those dark storms and whirlwinds haunt the Bosphorus until this day.

But the Argonauts went eastward, and out into the open sea, which we now call the Black Sea, but it was called the Euxine then. No Hellen had ever crossed it, and all feared that dreadful sea, and its rocks, and shoals, and fogs, and bitter freezing storms; and they told strange stories of it, some false and some half-true, how it stretched northward to the ends of the earth, and the sluggish Putrid Sea, and the everlasting night, and the regions of the dead. So the heroes trembled, for all their courage, as they came into that wild Black Sea, and saw it stretching out before them, without a shore, as far as eye could see.

And first Orpheus spoke, and warned them, “We shall come now to the wandering blue rocks; my mother warned me of them, Calliope, the immortal muse.”

And soon they saw the blue rocks shining like spires and castles of grey glass, while an ice-cold wind blew from them and chilled all the heroes’ hearts. And as they neared they could see them heaving, as they rolled upon the long sea-waves, crashing and grinding together, till the roar went up to heaven. The sea sprang up in spouts between them, and swept round them in white sheets of foam; but their heads swung nodding high in air, while the wind whistled shrill among the crags.

The heroes’ hearts sank within them, and they lay upon their oars in fear; but Orpheus called to Tiphys the helmsman, “Between them we must pass; so look ahead for an opening, and be brave, for Hera is with us.”

But Tiphys the cunning helmsman stood silent, clenching his teeth, till he saw a heron come flying mast-high toward the rocks, and hover awhile before them, as if looking for a passage through. Then he cried, “Hera has sent us a pilot; let us follow the cunning bird.”

Then the heron flapped to and fro a moment, till he saw a hidden gap, and into it he rushed like an arrow, while the heroes watched what would befall.

And the blue rocks clashed together as the bird fled swiftly through; but they struck but a feather from his tail, and then rebounded apart at the shock.

Then Tiphys cheered the heroes, and they shouted; and the oars bent like withes beneath their strokes as they rushed between those toppling ice-crags and the cold blue lips of death. And ere the rocks could meet again they had passed them, and were safe out in the open sea.

And after that they sailed on wearily along the Asian coast, by the Black Cape and Thyneis, where the hot stream of Thymbris falls into the sea, and Sangarius, whose waters float on the Euxine, till they came to Wolf the river, and to Wolf the kindly king. And there died two brave heroes, Idmon and Tiphys the wise helmsman: one died of an evil sickness, and one a wild boar slew. So the heroes heaped a mound above them, and set upon it an oar on high, and left them there to sleep together, on the far-off Lycian shore. But Idas killed the boar, and avenged Tiphys; and Ancaios took the rudder and was helmsman, and steered them on toward the east.

And they went on past Sinope, and many a mighty river's mouth, and past many a barbarous tribe, and the cities of the Amazons, the warlike women of the East, till all night they heard the clank of anvils and the roar of furnace-blasts, and the forge-fires shone like sparks through the darkness in the mountain glens aloft; for they were come to the shores of the Chalybes, the smiths who never tire, but serve Ares the cruel War-god, forging weapons day and night.

And at day-dawn they looked eastward, and midway between the sea and the sky they saw white snow-peaks hanging, glittering sharp and bright above the clouds. And they knew that they were come to Caucasus, at the end of all the earth: Caucasus the highest of all mountains, the father of the rivers of the East. On his peak lies chained the Titan, while a vulture tears his heart; and at his feet are piled dark forests round the magic Colchian land.

And they rowed three days to the eastward, while Caucasus rose higher hour by hour, till they saw the dark stream of Phasis rushing headlong to

the sea, and, shining above the tree-tops, the golden roofs of King Aeetes, the child of the Sun.

Then out spoke Ancaios the helmsman, “We are come to our goal at last, for there are the roofs of Aeetes, and the woods where all poisons grow; but who can tell us where among them is hid the golden fleece? Many a toil must we bear ere we find it, and bring it home to Greece.”

But Jason cheered the heroes, for his heart was high and bold; and he said, “I will go alone up to Aeetes, though he be the child of the Sun, and win him with soft words. Better so than to go altogether, and to come to blows at once.”

But the Minuai would not stay behind, so they rowed boldly up the stream.

And a dream came to Aeetes, and filled his heart with fear. He thought he saw a shining star, which fell into his daughter’s lap; and that Medea his daughter took it gladly, and carried it to the river-side, and cast it in, and there the whirling river bore it down, and out into the Euxine Sea.

Then he leapt up in fear, and bade his servants bring his chariot, that he might go down to the river-side and appease the nymphs, and the heroes whose spirits haunt the bank. So he went down in his golden chariot, and his daughters by his side, Medea the fair witch-maiden, and Chalciope, who had been Phrixus’ wife, and behind him a crowd of servants and soldiers, for he was a rich and mighty prince.

And as he drove down by the reedy river he saw *Argo* sliding up beneath the bank, and many a hero in her, like Immortals for beauty and for strength, as their weapons glittered round them in the level morning sunlight, through the white mist of the stream. But Jason was the noblest of all; for Hera, who loved him, gave him beauty and tallness and terrible manhood.

And when they came near together and looked into each other’s eyes the heroes were awed before Aeetes as he shone in his chariot, like his father the glorious Sun; for his robes were of rich gold tissue, and the rays of his diadem flashed fire; and in his hand he bore a jewelled sceptre, which glittered like the stars; and sternly he looked at them under his brows, and sternly he spoke and loud:

“Who are you, and what want you here, that you come to the shore of Cutaia? Do you take no account of my rule, nor of my people the

Colchians who serve me, who never tired yet in the battle, and know well how to face an invader?”

And the heroes sat silent awhile before the face of that ancient king. But Hera the awful goddess put courage into Jason’s heart, and he rose and shouted loudly in answer, “We are no pirates nor lawless men. We come not to plunder and to ravage, or carry away slaves from your land; but my uncle, the son of Poseidon, Pelias the Minuan king, he it is who has set me on a quest to bring home the golden fleece. And these too, my bold comrades, they are no nameless men; for some are the sons of Immortals, and some of heroes far renowned. And we too never tire in battle, and know well how to give blows and to take: yet we wish to be guests at your table: it will be better so for both.”

Then Aeetes’ race rushed up like a whirlwind, and his eyes flashed fire as he heard; but he crushed his anger down in his breast, and spoke mildly a cunning speech –

“If you will fight for the fleece with my Colchians, then many a man must die. But do you indeed expect to win from me the fleece in fight? So few you are that if you be worsted I can load your ship with your corpses. But if you will be ruled by me, you will find it better far to choose the best man among you, and let him fulfil the labours which I demand. Then I will give him the golden fleece for a prize and a glory to you all.”

So saying, he turned his horses and drove back in silence to the town. And the Minuai sat silent with sorrow, and longed for Heracles and his strength; for there was no facing the thousands of the Colchians and the fearful chance of war.

But Chalciope, Phrixus’ widow, went weeping to the town; for she remembered her Minuan husband, and all the pleasures of her youth, while she watched the fair faces of his kinsmen, and their long locks of golden hair. And she whispered to Medea her sister, “Why should all these brave men die? Why does not my father give them up the fleece, that my husband’s spirit may have rest?”

And Medea’s heart pitied the heroes, and Jason most of all; and she answered, “Our father is stern and terrible, and who can win the golden fleece?”

But Chalciope said, “These men are not like our men; there is nothing which they cannot dare nor do.”

And Medea thought of Jason and his brave countenance, and said, “If there was one among them who knew no fear, I could show him how to win the fleece.”

So in the dusk of evening they went down to the river-side, Chalciope and Medea the witch-maiden, and Argus, Phrixus’ son. And Argus the boy crept forward, among the beds of reeds, till he came where the heroes were sleeping, on the thwarts of the ship, beneath the bank, while Jason kept ward on shore, and leant upon his lance full of thought. And the boy came to Jason, and said:

“I am the son of Phrixus, your Cousin; and Chalciope my mother waits for you, to talk about the golden fleece.”

Then Jason went boldly with the boy, and found the two princesses standing; and when Chalciope saw him she wept, and took his hands, and cried: “O cousin of my beloved, go home before you die!”

“It would be base to go home now, fair princess, and to have sailed all these seas in vain.” Then both the princesses besought him; but Jason said, “It is too late.”

“But you know not,” said Medea, “what he must do who would win the fleece. He must tame the two brazen-footed bulls, who breathe devouring flame; and with them he must plough ere nightfall four acres in the field of Ares; and he must sow them with serpents’ teeth, of which each tooth springs up into an armed man. Then he must fight with all those warriors; and little will it profit him to conquer them, for the fleece is guarded by a serpent, more huge than any mountain pine; and over his body you must step if you would reach the golden fleece.”

Then Jason laughed bitterly. “Unjustly is that fleece kept here, and by an unjust and lawless king; and unjustly shall I die in my youth, for I will attempt it ere another sun be set.”

Then Medea trembled, and said, “No mortal man can reach that fleece unless I guide him through. For round it, beyond the river, is a wall full nine ells high, with lofty towers and buttresses, and mighty gates of threefold brass; and over the gates the wall is arched, with golden battlements above. And over the gateway sits Brimo, the wild witch-huntress of the woods, brandishing a pine-torch in her hands, while her mad hounds howl around. No man dare meet her or look on her, but only I

her priestess, and she watches far and wide lest any stranger should come near."

"No wall so high but it may be climbed at last, and no wood so thick but it may be crawled through; no serpent so wary but he may be charmed, or witch-queen so fierce but spells may soothe her; and I may yet win the golden fleece, if a wise maiden help bold men."

And he looked at Medea cunningly, and held her with his glittering eye, till she blushed and trembled, and said:

"Who can face the fire of the bulls' breath, and fight ten thousand armed men?"

"He whom you help," said Jason, flattering her, "for your fame is spread over all the earth. Are you not the queen of all enchantresses, wiser even than your sister Circe, in her fairy island in the West?"

"Would that I were with my sister Circe in her fairy island in the West, far away from sore temptation and thoughts which tear the heart! But if it must be so – for why should you die? – I have an ointment here; I made it from the magic ice-flower which sprang from Prometheus' wound, above the clouds on Caucasus, in the dreary fields of snow. Anoint yourself with that, and you shall have in you seven men's strength; and anoint your shield with it, and neither fire nor sword can harm you. But what you begin you must end before sunset, for its virtue lasts only one day. And anoint your helmet with it before you sow the serpents' teeth; and when the sons of earth spring up, cast your helmet among their ranks, and the deadly crop of the War-god's field will mow itself, and perish."

Then Jason fell on his knees before her, and thanked her and kissed her hands; and she gave him the vase of ointment, and fled trembling through the reeds. And Jason told his comrades what had happened, and showed them the box of ointment; and all rejoiced but Idas, and he grew mad with envy.

And at sunrise Jason went and bathed, and anointed himself from head to foot, and his shield, and his helmet, and his weapons, and bade his comrades try the spell. So they tried to bend his lance, but it stood like an iron bar; and Idas in spite hewed at it with his sword, but the blade flew to splinters in his face. Then they hurled their lances at his shield, but the spear-points turned like lead; and Caineus tried to throw him, but he never stirred a foot; and Polydeuces struck him with his fist a blow which would

have killed an ox, but Jason only smiled, and the heroes danced about him with delight; and he leapt, and ran, and shouted in the joy of that enormous strength, till the sun rose, and it was time to go and to claim Aeetes' promise.

So he sent up Telamon and Aithalides to tell Aeetes that he was ready for the fight; and they went up among the marble walls, and beneath the roofs of gold, and stood in Aeetes' hall, while he grew pale with rage.

"Fulfil your promise to us, child of the blazing Sun. Give us the serpents' teeth, and let loose the fiery bulls; for we have found a champion among us who can win the golden fleece."

And Aeetes bit his lips, for he fancied that they had fled away by night: but he could not go back from his promise; so he gave them the serpents' teeth.

Then he called for his chariot and his horses, and sent heralds through all the town; and all the people went out with him to the dreadful War-god's field.

And there Aeetes sat upon his throne, with his warriors on each hand, thousands and tens of thousands, clothed from head to foot in steel chain-mail. And the people and the women crowded to every window and bank and wall; while the Minuai stood together, a mere handful in the midst of that great host.

And Chalciope was there and Argus, trembling, and Medea, wrapped closely in her veil; but Aeetes did not know that she was muttering cunning spells between her lips.

Then Jason cried, "Fulfil your promise, and let your fiery bulls come forth."

Then Aeetes bade open the gates, and the magic bulls leapt out. Their brazen hoofs rang upon the ground, and their nostrils sent out sheets of flame, as they rushed with lowered heads upon Jason; but he never flinched a step. The flame of their breath swept round him, but it singed not a hair of his head; and the bulls stopped short and trembled when Medea began her spell.

Then Jason sprang upon the nearest and seized him by the horn; and up and down they wrestled, till the bull fell grovelling on his knees; for the heart of the brute died within him, and his mighty limbs were loosed,

beneath the steadfast eye of that dark witch-maiden and the magic whisper of her lips.

So both the bulls were tamed and yoked; and Jason bound them to the plough, and goaded them onward with his lance till he had ploughed the sacred field.

And all the Minuai shouted; but Aeetes bit his lips with rage, for the half of Jason's work was over, and the sun was yet high in heaven.

Then he took the serpents' teeth and sowed them, and waited what would befall. But Medea looked at him and at his helmet, lest he should forget the lesson she had taught.

And every furrow heaved and bubbled, and out of every clod arose a man. Out of the earth they rose by thousands, each clad from head to foot in steel, and drew their swords and rushed on Jason, where he stood in the midst alone.

Then the Minuai grew pale with fear for him; but Aeetes laughed a bitter laugh. "See! If I had not warriors enough already round me, I could call them out of the bosom of the earth."

But Jason snatched off his helmet, and hurled it into the thickest of the throng. And blind madness came upon them, suspicion, hate, and fear; and one cried to his fellow, "Thou didst strike me!" and another, "Thou art Jason; thou shalt die!"

So fury seized those earth-born phantoms, and each turned his hand against the rest; and they fought and were never weary, till they all lay dead upon the ground. Then the magic furrows opened, and the kind earth took them home into her breast and the grass grew up all green again above them, and Jason's work was done.

Then the Minuai rose and shouted, till Prometheus heard them from his crag. And Jason cried, "Lead me to the fleece this moment, before the sun goes down."

But Aeetes thought, "He has conquered the bulls, and sown and reaped the deadly crop. Who is this who is proof against all magic? He may kill the serpent yet."

So he delayed, and sat taking counsel with his princes till the sun went down and all was dark. Then he bade a herald cry, "Every man to his home for tonight. Tomorrow we will meet these heroes, and speak about the golden fleece."

Then he turned and looked at Medea. “This is your doing, false witch-maid! You have helped these yellow-haired strangers, and brought shame upon your father and yourself!”

Medea shrank and trembled, and her face grew pale with fear; and Aeetes knew that she was guilty, and whispered, “If they win the fleece, you die!”

But the Minuai marched toward their ship, growling like lions cheated of their prey; for they saw that Aeetes meant to mock them, and to cheat them out of all their toil. And Oileus said, “Let us go to the grove together, and take the fleece by force.”

And Idas the rash cried, “Let us draw lots who shall go in first; for, while the dragon is devouring one, the rest can slay him and carry off the fleece in peace.” But Jason held them back, though he praised them; for he hoped for Medea’s help.

And after awhile Medea came trembling, and wept a long while before she spoke. And at last –

“My end is come, and I must die; for my father has found out that I have helped you. You he would kill if he dared; but he will not harm you, because you have been his guests. Go then, go, and remember poor Medea when you are far away across the sea.”

But all the heroes cried: “If you die, we die with you; for without you we cannot win the fleece, and home we will not go without it, but fall here fighting to the last man.”

“You need not die,” said Jason. “Flee home with us across the sea. Show us first how to win the fleece; for you can do it. Why else are you the priestess of the grove? Show us but how to win the fleece, and come with us, and you shall be my queen, and rule over the rich princes of the Minuai, in Iolcos by the sea.”

And all the heroes pressed round, and vowed to her that she should be their queen.

Medea wept, and shuddered, and hid her face in her hands; for her heart yearned after her sisters and her playfellows, and the home where she was brought up as a child. But at last she looked up at Jason, and spoke between her sobs:

“Must I leave my home and my people, to wander with strangers across the sea? The lot is cast, and I must endure it. I will show you how to win the golden fleece. Bring up your ship to the wood-side, and moor her there

against the bank; and let Jason come up at midnight, and one brave comrade with him, and meet me beneath the wall."

Then all the heroes cried together, "I will go!" "and I!" "and I!"

And Idas the rash grew mad with envy; for he longed to be foremost in all things. But Medea calmed them, and said, "Orpheus shall go with Jason, and bring his magic harp; for I hear of him that he is the king of all minstrels, and can charm all things on earth."

And Orpheus laughed for joy, and clapped his hands, because the choice had fallen on him; for in those days poets and singers were as bold warriors as the best.

So at midnight they went up the bank, and found Medea; and beside came Absyrtus her young brother, leading a yearling lamb.

Then Medea brought them to a thicket beside the War-god's gate; and there she bade Jason dig a ditch, and kill the lamb, and leave it there, and strew on it magic herbs and honey from the honeycomb.

Then sprang up through the earth, with the red fire flashing before her, Brimo the wild witch-huntress, while her mad hounds howled around. She had one head like a horse's, and another like a ravening hound's, and another like a hissing snake's, and a sword in either hand. And she leapt into the ditch with her hounds, and they ate and drank their fill, while Jason and Orpheus trembled, and Medea hid her eyes. And at last the witch-queen vanished, and fled with her hounds into the woods; and the bars of the gates fell down, and the brazen doors flew wide, and Medea and the heroes ran forward and hurried through the poison wood, among the dark stems of the mighty beeches, guided by the gleam of the golden fleece, until they saw it hanging on one vast tree in the midst. And Jason would have sprung to seize it; but Medea held him back, and pointed, shuddering, to the tree-foot, where the mighty serpent lay, coiled in and out among the roots, with a body like a mountain pine. His coils stretched many a fathom, spangled with bronze and gold; and half of him they could see, but no more, for the rest lay in the darkness far beyond.

And when he saw them coming he lifted up his head, and watched them with his small bright eyes, and flashed his forked tongue, and roared like the fire among the woodlands, till the forest tossed and groaned. For his cries shook the trees from leaf to root, and swept over the long reaches of

the river, and over Aeetes' hall, and woke the sleepers in the city, till mothers clasped their children in their fear.

But Medea called gently to him, and he stretched out his long spotted neck, and licked her hand, and looked up in her face, as if to ask for food. Then she made a sign to Orpheus, and he began his magic song.

And as he sung, the forest grew calm again, and the leaves on every tree hung still; and the serpent's head sank down, and his brazen coils grew limp, and his glittering eyes closed lazily, till he breathed as gently as a child, while Orpheus called to pleasant Slumber, who gives peace to men, and beasts, and waves.

Then Jason leapt forward warily, and stepped across that mighty snake, and tore the fleece from off the tree-trunk; and the four rushed down the garden, to the bank where the *Argo* lay.

There was a silence for a moment, while Jason held the golden fleece on high. Then he cried, "Go now, good *Argo*, swift and steady, if ever you would see Pelion more."

And she went, as the heroes drove her, grim and silent all, with muffled oars, till the pine-wood bent like willow in their hands, and stout *Argo* groaned beneath their strokes.

On and on, beneath the dewy darkness, they fled swiftly down the swirling stream; underneath black walls, and temples, and the castles of the princes of the East; past sluice-mouths, and fragrant gardens, and groves of all strange fruits; past marshes where fat kine lay sleeping, and long beds of whispering reeds; till they heard the merry music of the surge upon the bar, as it tumbled in the moonlight all alone.

Into the surge they rushed, and *Argo* leapt the breakers like a horse; for she knew the time was come to show her mettle, and win honour for the heroes and herself.

Into the surge they rushed, and *Argo* leapt the breakers like a horse, till the heroes stopped all panting, each man upon his oar, as she slid into the still broad sea.

Then Orpheus took his harp and sang a paean, till the heroes' hearts rose high again; and they rowed on stoutly and steadfastly, away into the darkness of the West.

# How the Argonauts Were Driven into the Unknown Sea

**SO THEY FLED AWAY** in haste to the westward; but Aeetes manned his fleet and followed them. And Lynceus the quick-eyed saw him coming, while he was still many a mile away, and cried, “I see a hundred ships, like a flock of white swans, far in the east.” And at that they rowed hard, like heroes; but the ships came nearer every hour.

Then Medea, the dark witch-maiden, laid a cruel and a cunning plot; for she killed Absyrtus her young brother, and cast him into the sea, and said, “Ere my father can take up his corpse and bury it, he must wait long, and be left far behind.”

And all the heroes shuddered, and looked one at the other for shame; yet they did not punish that dark witch-woman, because she had won for them the golden fleece.

And when Aeetes came to the place he saw the floating corpse; and he stopped a long while, and bewailed his son, and took him up, and went home. But he sent on his sailors toward the westward, and bound them by a mighty curse: “Bring back to me that dark witch-woman, that she may die a dreadful death. But if you return without her, you shall die by the same death yourselves.”

So the Argonauts escaped for that time: but Father Zeus saw that foul crime; and out of the heavens he sent a storm, and swept the ship far from her course. Day after day the storm drove her, amid foam and blinding mist, till they knew no longer where they were, for the sun was blotted from the skies. And at last the ship struck on a shoal, amid low isles of mud and sand, and the waves rolled over her and through her, and the heroes lost all hope of life.

Then Jason cried to Hera, “Fair queen, who hast befriended us till now, why hast thou left us in our misery, to die here among unknown seas? It is hard to lose the honour which we have won with such toil and danger, and hard never to see Hellas again, and the pleasant bay of Pagasai.”

Then out and spoke the magic bough which stood upon the *Argo's* beak, "Because Father Zeus is angry, all this has fallen on you; for a cruel crime has been done on board, and the sacred ship is foul with blood."

At that some of the heroes cried, "Medea is the murderess. Let the witch-woman bear her sin, and die!" And they seized Medea, to hurl her into the sea, and atone for the young boy's death; but the magic bough spoke again, "Let her live till her crimes are full. Vengeance waits for her, slow and sure; but she must live, for you need her still. She must show you the way to her sister Circe, who lives among the islands of the West. To her you must sail, a weary way, and she shall cleanse you from your guilt."

Then all the heroes wept aloud when they heard the sentence of the oak; for they knew that a dark journey lay before them, and years of bitter toil. And some upbraided the dark witch-woman, and some said, "Nay, we are her debtors still; without her we should never have won the fleece." But most of them bit their lips in silence, for they feared the witch's spells.

And now the sea grew calmer, and the sun shone out once more, and the heroes thrust the ship off the sand-bank, and rowed forward on their weary course under the guiding of the dark witch-maiden, into the wastes of the unknown sea.

Whither they went I cannot tell, nor how they came to Circe's isle. Some say that they went to the westward, and up the Ister stream, and so came into the Adriatic, dragging their ship over the snowy Alps. And others say that they went southward, into the Red Indian Sea, and past the sunny lands where spices grow, round Aethiopia toward the West; and that at last they came to Libya, and dragged their ship across the burning sands, and over the hills into the Syrtes, where the flats and quicksands spread for many a mile, between rich Cyrene and the Lotus-eaters' shore. But all these are but dreams and fables, and dim hints of unknown lands.

But all say that they came to a place where they had to drag their ship across the land nine days with ropes and rollers, till they came into an unknown sea. And the best of all the old songs tells us how they went away toward the North, till they came to the slope of Caucasus, where it sinks into the sea; and to the narrow Cimmerian Bosphorus, where the Titan swam across upon the bull; and thence into the lazy waters of the still Maeotid lake. And thence they went northward ever, up the Tanais, which we call Don, past the Geloni and Sauromatai, and many a wandering

shepherd-tribe, and the one-eyed Arimaspi, of whom old Greek poets tell, who steal the gold from the Griffins, in the cold Riphaian hills.

And they passed the Scythian archers, and the Tauri who eat men, and the wandering Hyperboreai, who feed their flocks beneath the pole-star, until they came into the northern ocean, the dull dead Cronian Sea. And there *Argo* would move on no longer; and each man clasped his elbow, and leaned his head upon his hand, heart-broken with toil and hunger, and gave himself up to death. But brave Ancaios the helmsman cheered up their hearts once more, and bade them leap on land, and haul the ship with ropes and rollers for many a weary day, whether over land, or mud, or ice, I know not, for the song is mixed and broken like a dream. And it says next, how they came to the rich nation of the famous long-lived men; and to the coast of the Cimmerians, who never saw the sun, buried deep in the glens of the snow mountains; and to the fair land of Hermione, where dwelt the most righteous of all nations; and to the gates of the world below, and to the dwelling-place of dreams.

And at last Ancaios shouted, “Endure a little while, brave friends, the worst is surely past; for I can see the pure west wind ruffle the water, and hear the roar of ocean on the sands. So raise up the mast, and set the sail, and face what comes like men.”

Then out spoke the magic bough, “Ah, would that I had perished long ago, and been whelmed by the dread blue rocks, beneath the fierce swell of the Euxine! Better so, than to wander for ever, disgraced by the guilt of my princes; for the blood of Absyrtus still tracks me, and woe follows hard upon woe. And now some dark horror will clutch me, if I come near the Isle of Ierne. Unless you will cling to the land, and sail southward and southward for ever, I shall wander beyond the Atlantic, to the ocean which has no shore.”

Then they blest the magic bough, and sailed southward along the land. But ere they could pass Ierne, the land of mists and storms, the wild wind came down, dark and roaring, and caught the sail, and strained the ropes. And away they drove twelve nights, on the wide wild western sea, through the foam, and over the rollers, while they saw neither sun nor stars. And they cried again, “We shall perish, for we know not where we are. We are lost in the dreary damp darkness, and cannot tell north from south.”

But Lynceus the long-sighted called gaily from the bows, “Take heart again, brave sailors; for I see a pine-clad isle, and the halls of the kind Earth-mother, with a crown of clouds around them.”

But Orpheus said, “Turn from them, for no living man can land there: there is no harbour on the coast, but steep-walled cliffs all round.”

So Ancaios turned the ship away; and for three days more they sailed on, till they came to Aiaia, Circe’s home, and the fairy island of the West.

And there Jason bid them land, and seek about for any sign of living man. And as they went inland Circe met them, coming down toward the ship; and they trembled when they saw her, for her hair, and face, and robes shone like flame.

And she came and looked at Medea; and Medea hid her face beneath her veil.

And Circe cried, “Ah, wretched girl, have you forgotten all your sins, that you come hither to my island, where the flowers bloom all the year round? Where is your aged father, and the brother whom you killed? Little do I expect you to return in safety with these strangers whom you love. I will send you food and wine: but your ship must not stay here, for it is foul with sin, and foul with sin its crew.”

And the heroes prayed her, but in vain, and cried, “Cleanse us from our guilt!” But she sent them away, and said, “Go on to Malea, and there you may be cleansed, and return home.”

Then a fair wind rose, and they sailed eastward by Tartessus on the Iberian shore, till they came to the Pillars of Hercules, and the Mediterranean Sea. And thence they sailed on through the deeps of Sardinia, and past the Ausonian islands, and the capes of the Tyrrhenian shore, till they came to a flowery island, upon a still bright summer’s eve. And as they neared it, slowly and wearily, they heard sweet songs upon the shore. But when Medea heard it, she started, and cried, “Beware, all heroes, for these are the rocks of the Sirens. You must pass close by them, for there is no other channel; but those who listen to that song are lost.”

Then Orpheus spoke, the king of all minstrels, “Let them match their song against mine. I have charmed stones, and trees, and dragons, how much more the hearts of men!” So he caught up his lyre, and stood upon the poop, and began his magic song.

And now they could see the Sirens on Anthemousa, the flowery isle; three fair maidens sitting on the beach, beneath a red rock in the setting sun, among beds of crimson poppies and golden asphodel. Slowly they sung and sleepily, with silver voices, mild and clear, which stole over the golden waters, and into the hearts of all the heroes, in spite of Orpheus' song.

And all things stayed around and listened; the gulls sat in white lines along the rocks; on the beach great seals lay basking, and kept time with lazy heads; while silver shoals of fish came up to hearken, and whispered as they broke the shining calm. The Wind overhead hushed his whistling, as he shepherded his clouds toward the west; and the clouds stood in mid blue, and listened dreaming, like a flock of golden sheep.

And as the heroes listened, the oars fell from their hands, and their heads drooped on their breasts, and they closed their heavy eyes; and they dreamed of bright still gardens, and of slumbers under murmuring pines, till all their toil seemed foolishness, and they thought of their renown no more.

Then one lifted his head suddenly, and cried, "What use in wandering for ever? Let us stay here and rest awhile." And another, "Let us row to the shore, and hear the words they sing." And another, "I care not for the words, but for the music. They shall sing me to sleep, that I may rest."

And Butes, the son of Pandion, the fairest of all mortal men, leapt out and swam toward the shore, crying, "I come, I come, fair maidens, to live and die here, listening to your song."

Then Medea clapped her hands together, and cried, "Sing louder, Orpheus, sing a bolder strain; wake up these hapless sluggards, or none of them will see the land of Hellas more."

Then Orpheus lifted his harp, and crashed his cunning hand across the strings; and his music and his voice rose like a trumpet through the still evening air; into the air it rushed like thunder, till the rocks rang and the sea; and into their souls it rushed like wine, till all hearts beat fast within their breasts.

And he sung the song of Perseus, how the Gods led him over land and sea, and how he slew the loathly Gorgon, and won himself a peerless bride; and how he sits now with the Gods upon Olympus, a shining star in the sky, immortal with his immortal bride, and honoured by all men below.

So Orpheus sang, and the Sirens, answering each other across the golden sea, till Orpheus' voice drowned the Sirens', and the heroes caught their oars again.

And they cried, "We will be men like Perseus, and we will dare and suffer to the last. Sing us his song again, brave Orpheus, that we may forget the Sirens and their spell."

And as Orpheus sang, they dashed their oars into the sea, and kept time to his music, as they fled fast away; and the Sirens' voices died behind them, in the hissing of the foam along their wake.

But Butes swam to the shore, and knelt down before the Sirens, and cried, "Sing on! Sing on!"

But he could say no more, for a charmed sleep came over him, and a pleasant humming in his ears; and he sank all along upon the pebbles, and forgot all heaven and earth, and never looked at that sad beach around him, all strewn with the bones of men.

Then slowly rose up those three fair sisters, with a cruel smile upon their lips; and slowly they crept down towards him, like leopards who creep upon their prey; and their hands were like the talons of eagles as they stepped across the bones of their victims to enjoy their cruel feast.

But fairest Aphrodite saw him from the highest Idalian peak, and she pitied his youth and his beauty, and leapt up from her golden throne; and like a falling star she cleft the sky, and left a trail of glittering light, till she stooped to the Isle of the Sirens, and snatched their prey from their claws. And she lifted Butes as he lay sleeping, and wrapped him in golden mist; and she bore him to the peak of Lilybaeum, and he slept there many a pleasant year.

But when the Sirens saw that they were conquered, they shrieked for envy and rage, and leapt from the beach into the sea, and were changed into rocks until this day.

Then they came to the straits by Lilybaeum, and saw Sicily, the three-cornered island, under which Enceladus the giant lies groaning day and night, and when he turns the earth quakes, and his breath bursts out in roaring flames from the highest cone of Etna, above the chestnut woods. And there Charybdis caught them in its fearful coils of wave, and rolled mast-high about them, and spun them round and round; and they could go neither back nor forward, while the whirlpool sucked them in.

And while they struggled they saw near them, on the other side the strait, a rock stand in the water, with its peak wrapped round in clouds – a rock which no man could climb, though he had twenty hands and feet, for the stone was smooth and slippery, as if polished by man's hand; and halfway up a misty cave looked out toward the west.

And when Orpheus saw it he groaned, and struck his hands together. And "Little will it help us," he cried, "to escape the jaws of the whirlpool; for in that cave lives Scylla, the sea-hag with a young whelp's voice; my mother warned me of her ere we sailed away from Hellas; she has six heads, and six long necks, and hides in that dark cleft. And from her cave she fishes for all things which pass by – for sharks, and seals, and dolphins, and all the herds of Amphitrite. And never ship's crew boasted that they came safe by her rock, for she bends her long necks down to them, and every mouth takes up a man. And who will help us now? For Hera and Zeus hate us, and our ship is foul with guilt; so we must die, whatever befalls."

Then out of the depths came Thetis, Peleus' silver-footed bride, for love of her gallant husband, and all her nymphs around her; and they played like snow-white dolphins, diving on from wave to wave, before the ship, and in her wake, and beside her, as dolphins play. And they caught the ship, and guided her, and passed her on from hand to hand, and tossed her through the billows, as maidens toss the ball. And when Scylla stooped to seize her, they struck back her ravening heads, and foul Scylla whined, as a whelp whines, at the touch of their gentle hands. But she shrank into her cave affrighted – for all bad things shrink from good – and *Argo* leapt safe past her, while a fair breeze rose behind. Then Thetis and her nymphs sank down to their coral caves beneath the sea, and their gardens of green and purple, where live flowers bloom all the year round; while the heroes went on rejoicing, yet dreading what might come next.

After that they rowed on steadily for many a weary day, till they saw a long high island, and beyond it a mountain land. And they searched till they found a harbour, and there rowed boldly in. But after awhile they stopped, and wondered, for there stood a great city on the shore, and temples and walls and gardens, and castles high in air upon the cliffs. And on either side they saw a harbour, with a narrow mouth, but wide within; and black ships without number, high and dry upon the shore.

Then Ancaios, the wise helmsman, spoke, “What new wonder is this? I know all isles, and harbours, and the windings of all seas; and this should be Corcyra, where a few wild goat-herds dwell. But whence come these new harbours and vast works of polished stone?”

But Jason said, “They can be no savage people. We will go in and take our chance.”

So they rowed into the harbour, among a thousand black-beaked ships, each larger far than *Argo*, toward a quay of polished stone. And they wondered at that mighty city, with its roofs of burnished brass, and long and lofty walls of marble, with strong palisades above. And the quays were full of people, merchants, and mariners, and slaves, going to and fro with merchandise among the crowd of ships. And the heroes’ hearts were humbled, and they looked at each other and said, “We thought ourselves a gallant crew when we sailed from Iolcos by the sea; but how small we look before this city, like an ant before a hive of bees.”

Then the sailors hailed them roughly from the quay, “What men are you? – We want no strangers here, nor pirates. We keep our business to ourselves.”

But Jason answered gently, with many a flattering word, and praised their city and their harbour, and their fleet of gallant ships. “Surely you are the children of Poseidon, and the masters of the sea; and we are but poor wandering mariners, worn out with thirst and toil. Give us but food and water, and we will go on our voyage in peace.”

Then the sailors laughed, and answered, “Stranger, you are no fool; you talk like an honest man, and you shall find us honest too. We are the children of Poseidon, and the masters of the sea; but come ashore to us, and you shall have the best that we can give.”

So they limped ashore, all stiff and weary, with long ragged beards and sunburnt cheeks, and garments torn and weather-stained, and weapons rusted with the spray, while the sailors laughed at them (for they were rough-tongued, though their hearts were frank and kind). And one said, “These fellows are but raw sailors; they look as if they had been sea-sick all the day.” And another, “Their legs have grown crooked with much rowing, till they waddle in their walk like ducks.”

At that Idas the rash would have struck them; but Jason held him back, till one of the merchant kings spoke to them, a tall and stately man.

“Do not be angry, strangers; the sailor boys must have their jest. But we will treat you justly and kindly, for strangers and poor men come from God; and you seem no common sailors by your strength, and height, and weapons. Come up with me to the palace of Alcinous, the rich sea-going king, and we will feast you well and heartily; and after that you shall tell us your name.”

But Medea hung back, and trembled, and whispered in Jason’s ear, “We are betrayed, and are going to our ruin, for I see my countrymen among the crowd; dark-eyed Colchi in steel mail-shirts, such as they wear in my father’s land.”

“It is too late to turn,” said Jason. And he spoke to the merchant king, “What country is this, good sir; and what is this new-built town?”

‘This is the land of the Phaeaces, beloved by all the Immortals; for they come hither and feast like friends with us, and sit by our side in the hall. Hither we came from Liburnia to escape the unrighteous Cyclopes; for they robbed us, peaceful merchants, of our hard-earned wares and wealth. So Nausithous, the son of Poseidon, brought us hither, and died in peace; and now his son Alcinous rules us, and Arete the wisest of queens.”

So they went up across the square, and wondered still more as they went; for along the quays lay in order great cables, and yards, and masts, before the fair temple of Poseidon, the blue-haired king of the seas. And round the square worked the ship-wrights, as many in number as ants, twining ropes, and hewing timber, and smoothing long yards and oars. And the Minuai went on in silence through clean white marble streets, till they came to the hall of Alcinous, and they wondered then still more. For the lofty palace shone aloft in the sun, with walls of plated brass, from the threshold to the innermost chamber, and the doors were of silver and gold. And on each side of the doorway sat living dogs of gold, who never grew old or died, so well Hephaestus had made them in his forges in smoking Lemnos, and gave them to Alcinous to guard his gates by night. And within, against the walls, stood thrones on either side, down the whole length of the hall, strewn with rich glossy shawls; and on them the merchant kings of those crafty sea-roving Phaeaces sat eating and drinking in pride, and feasting there all the year round. And boys of molten gold stood each on a polished altar, and held torches in their hands, to give light all night to the guests. And round the house sat fifty maid-servants, some

grinding the meal in the mill, some turning the spindle, some weaving at the loom, while their hands twinkled as they passed the shuttle, like quivering aspen leaves.

And outside before the palace a great garden was walled round, filled full of stately fruit-trees, grey olives and sweet figs, and pomegranates, pears, and apples, which bore the whole year round. For the rich south-west wind fed them, till pear grew ripe on pear, fig on fig, and grape on grape, all the winter and the spring. And at the farther end gay flower-beds bloomed through all seasons of the year; and two fair fountains rose, and ran, one through the garden grounds, and one beneath the palace gate, to water all the town. Such noble gifts the heavens had given to Alcinous the wise.

So they went in, and saw him sitting, like Poseidon, on his throne, with his golden sceptre by him, in garments stiff with gold, and in his hand a sculptured goblet, as he pledged the merchant kings; and beside him stood Arete, his wise and lovely queen, and leaned against a pillar as she spun her golden threads.

Then Alcinous rose, and welcomed them, and bade them sit and eat; and the servants brought them tables, and bread, and meat, and wine.

But Medea went on trembling toward Arete the fair queen, and fell at her knees, and clasped them, and cried, weeping, as she knelt:

"I am your guest, fair queen, and I entreat you by Zeus, from whom prayers come. Do not send me back to my father to die some dreadful death; but let me go my way, and bear my burden. Have I not had enough of punishment and shame?"

"Who are you, strange maiden? And what is the meaning of your prayer?"

"I am Medea, daughter of Aeetes, and I saw my countrymen here today; and I know that they are come to find me, and take me home to die some dreadful death."

Then Arete frowned, and said, "Lead this girl in, my maidens; and let the kings decide, not I."

And Alcinous leapt up from his throne, and cried, "Speak, strangers, who are you? And who is this maiden?"

"We are the heroes of the Minuai," said Jason; "and this maiden has spoken truth. We are the men who took the golden fleece, the men whose fame has run round every shore. We came hither out of the ocean, after

sorrows such as man never saw before. We went out many, and come back few, for many a noble comrade have we lost. So let us go, as you should let your guests go, in peace; that the world may say, ‘Alcinous is a just king.’”

But Alcinous frowned, and stood deep in thought; and at last he spoke:

“Had not the deed been done which is done, I should have said this day to myself, ‘It is an honour to Alcinous, and to his children after him, that the far-famed Argonauts are his guests.’ But these Colchi are my guests, as you are; and for this month they have waited here with all their fleet, for they have hunted all the seas of Hellas, and could not find you, and dared neither go farther, nor go home.”

“Let them choose out their champions, and we will fight them, man for man.”

“No guests of ours shall fight upon our island, and if you go outside they will outnumber you. I will do justice between you, for I know and do what is right.”

Then he turned to his kings, and said, “This may stand over till tomorrow. Tonight we will feast our guests, and hear the story of all their wanderings, and how they came hither out of the ocean.”

So Alcinous bade the servants take the heroes in, and bathe them, and give them clothes. And they were glad when they saw the warm water, for it was long since they had bathed. And they washed off the sea-salt from their limbs, and anointed themselves from head to foot with oil, and combed out their golden hair. Then they came back again into the hall, while the merchant kings rose up to do them honour. And each man said to his neighbour, “No wonder that these men won fame. How they stand now like Giants, or Titans, or Immortals come down from Olympus, though many a winter has worn them, and many a fearful storm. What must they have been when they sailed from Iolcos, in the bloom of their youth, long ago?”

Then they went out to the garden; and the merchant princes said, “Heroes, run races with us. Let us see whose feet are nimblest.”

“We cannot race against you, for our limbs are stiff from sea; and we have lost our two swift comrades, the sons of the north wind. But do not think us cowards: if you wish to try our strength, we will shoot, and box, and wrestle, against any men on earth.”

And Alcinous smiled, and answered, “I believe you, gallant guests; with your long limbs and broad shoulders, we could never match you here. For we care nothing here for boxing, or for shooting with the bow; but for feasts, and songs, and harping, and dancing, and running races, to stretch our limbs on shore.”

So they danced there and ran races, the jolly merchant kings, till the night fell, and all went in.

And then they ate and drank, and comforted their weary souls, till Alcinous called a herald, and bade him go and fetch the harper.

The herald went out, and fetched the harper, and led him in by the hand; and Alcinous cut him a piece of meat, from the fattest of the haunch, and sent it to him, and said, “Sing to us, noble harper, and rejoice the heroes’ hearts.”

So the harper played and sang, while the dancers danced strange figures; and after that the tumblers showed their tricks, till the heroes laughed again.

Then, “Tell me, heroes,” asked Alcinous, “you who have sailed the ocean round, and seen the manners of all nations, have you seen such dancers as ours here, or heard such music and such singing? We hold ours to be the best on earth.”

“Such dancing we have never seen,” said Orpheus; “and your singer is a happy man, for Phoebus himself must have taught him, or else he is the son of a Muse, as I am also, and have sung once or twice, though not so well as he.”

“Sing to us, then, noble stranger,” said Alcinous; “and we will give you precious gifts.”

So Orpheus took his magic harp, and sang to them a stirring song of their voyage from Iolcos, and their dangers, and how they won the golden fleece; and of Medea’s love, and how she helped them, and went with them over land and sea; and of all their fearful dangers, from monsters, and rocks, and storms, till the heart of Arete was softened, and all the women wept. And the merchant kings rose up, each man from off his golden throne, and clapped their hands, and shouted, “Hail to the noble Argonauts, who sailed the unknown sea!”

Then he went on, and told their journey over the sluggish northern main, and through the shoreless outer ocean, to the fairy island of the west; and

of the Sirens, and Scylla, and Charybdis, and all the wonders they had seen, till midnight passed and the day dawned; but the kings never thought of sleep. Each man sat still and listened, with his chin upon his hand.

And at last, when Orpheus had ended, they all went thoughtful out, and the heroes lay down to sleep, beneath the sounding porch outside, where Arete had strewn them rugs and carpets, in the sweet still summer night.

But Arete pleaded hard with her husband for Medea, for her heart was softened. And she said, “The Gods will punish her, not we. After all, she is our guest and my suppliant, and prayers are the daughters of Zeus. And who, too, dare part man and wife, after all they have endured together?”

And Alcinous smiled. “The minstrel’s song has charmed you: but I must remember what is right, for songs cannot alter justice; and I must be faithful to my name. Alcinous I am called, the man of sturdy sense; and Alcinous I will be.” But for all that Arete besought him, until she won him round.

So next morning he sent a herald, and called the kings into the square, and said, “This is a puzzling matter: remember but one thing. These Minuai live close by us, and we may meet them often on the seas; but Aeetes lives afar off, and we have only heard his name. Which, then, of the two is it safer to offend – the men near us, or the men far off?”

The princes laughed, and praised his wisdom; and Alcinous called the heroes to the square, and the Colchi also; and they came and stood opposite each other, but Medea stayed in the palace. Then Alcinous spoke, “Heroes of the Colchi, what is your errand about this lady?”

“To carry her home with us, that she may die a shameful death; but if we return without her, we must die the death she should have died.”

“What say you to this, Jason the Aeolid?” said Alcinous, turning to the Minuai.

“I say,” said the cunning Jason, “that they are come here on a bootless errand. Do you think that you can make her follow you, heroes of the Colchi – her, who knows all spells and charms? She will cast away your ships on quicksands, or call down on you Brimo the wild huntress; or the chains will fall from off her wrists, and she will escape in her dragon-car; or if not thus, some other way, for she has a thousand plans and wiles. And why return home at all, brave heroes, and face the long seas again, and the Bosphorus, and the stormy Euxine, and double all your toil? There is many

a fair land round these coasts, which waits for gallant men like you. Better to settle there, and build a city, and let Aeetes and Colchis help themselves."

Then a murmur rose among the Colchi, and some cried "He has spoken well;" and some, "We have had enough of roving, we will sail the seas no more!" And the chief said at last, "Be it so, then; a plague she has been to us, and a plague to the house of her father, and a plague she will be to you. Take her, since you are no wiser; and we will sail away toward the north."

Then Alcinous gave them food, and water, and garments, and rich presents of all sorts; and he gave the same to the Minuai, and sent them all away in peace.

So Jason kept the dark witch-maiden to breed him woe and shame; and the Colchi went northward into the Adriatic, and settled, and built towns along the shore.

Then the heroes rowed away to the eastward, to reach Hellas, their beloved land; but a storm came down upon them, and swept them far away toward the south. And they rowed till they were spent with struggling, through the darkness and the blinding rain; but where they were they could not tell, and they gave up all hope of life. And at last touched the ground, and when daylight came waded to the shore; and saw nothing round but sand and desolate salt pools, for they had come to the quicksands of the Syrtis, and the dreary treeless flats which lie between Numidia and Cyrene, on the burning shore of Africa. And there they wandered starving for many a weary day, ere they could launch their ship again, and gain the open sea. And there Canthus was killed, while he was trying to drive off sheep, by a stone which a herdsman threw.

And there too Mopsus died, the seer who knew the voices of all birds; but he could not foretell his own end, for he was bitten in the foot by a snake, one of those which sprang from the Gorgon's head when Perseus carried it across the sands.

At last they rowed away toward the northward, for many a weary day, till their water was spent, and their food eaten; and they were worn out with hunger and thirst. But at last they saw a long steep island, and a blue peak high among the clouds; and they knew it for the peak of Ida, and the famous land of Crete. And they said, "We will land in Crete, and see

Minos the just king, and all his glory and his wealth; at least he will treat us hospitably, and let us fill our water-casks upon the shore."

But when they came nearer to the island they saw a wondrous sight upon the cliffs. For on a cape to the westward stood a giant, taller than any mountain pine, who glittered aloft against the sky like a tower of burnished brass. He turned and looked on all sides round him, till he saw the *Argo* and her crew; and when he saw them he came toward them, more swiftly than the swiftest horse, leaping across the glens at a bound, and striding at one step from down to down. And when he came abreast of them he brandished his arms up and down, as a ship hoists and lowers her yards, and shouted with his brazen throat like a trumpet from off the hills, "You are pirates, you are robbers! If you dare land here, you die."

Then the heroes cried, "We are no pirates. We are all good men and true, and all we ask is food and water;" but the giant cried the more:

"You are robbers, you are pirates all; I know you; and if you land, you shall die the death."

Then he waved his arms again as a signal, and they saw the people flying inland, driving their flocks before them, while a great flame arose among the hills. Then the giant ran up a valley and vanished, and the heroes lay on their oars in fear.

But Medea stood watching all from under her steep black brows, with a cunning smile upon her lips, and a cunning plot within her heart. At last she spoke, "I know this giant. I heard of him in the East. Hephaestus the Fire King made him in his forge in Etna beneath the earth, and called him Talus, and gave him to Minos for a servant, to guard the coast of Crete. Thrice a day he walks round the island, and never stops to sleep; and if strangers land he leaps into his furnace, which flames there among the hills; and when he is red-hot he rushes on them, and burns them in his brazen hands."

Then all the heroes cried, "What shall we do, wise Medea? We must have water, or we die of thirst. Flesh and blood we can face fairly; but who can face this red-hot brass?"

"I can face red-hot brass, if the tale I hear be true. For they say that he has but one vein in all his body, filled with liquid fire; and that this vein is closed with a nail: but I know not where that nail is placed. But if I can get it once into these hands, you shall water your ship here in peace."

Then she bade them put her on shore, and row off again, and wait what would befall.

And the heroes obeyed her unwillingly, for they were ashamed to leave her so alone; but Jason said, “She is dearer to me than to any of you, yet I will trust her freely on shore; she has more plots than we can dream of in the windings of that fair and cunning head.”

So they left the witch-maiden on the shore; and she stood there in her beauty all alone, till the giant strode back red-hot from head to heel, while the grass hissed and smoked beneath his tread.

And when he saw the maiden alone, he stopped; and she looked boldly up into his face without moving, and began her magic song:

*“Life is short, though life is sweet; and even men of brass and fire must die. The brass must rust, the fire must cool, for time gnaws all things in their turn. Life is short, though life is sweet: but sweeter to live for ever; sweeter to live ever youthful like the Gods, who have ichor in their veins – ichor which gives life, and youth, and joy, and a bounding heart.”*

Then Talus said, “Who are you, strange maiden, and where is this ichor of youth?”

Then Medea held up a flask of crystal, and said, “Here is the ichor of youth. I am Medea the enchantress; my sister Circe gave me this, and said, ‘Go and reward Talus, the faithful servant, for his fame is gone out into all lands.’ So come, and I will pour this into your veins, that you may live for ever young.”

And he listened to her false words, that simple Talus, and came near; and Medea said, “Dip yourself in the sea first, and cool yourself, lest you burn my tender hands; then show me where the nail in your vein is, that I may pour the ichor in.”

Then that simple Talus dipped himself in the sea, till it hissed, and roared, and smoked; and came and knelt before Medea, and showed her the secret nail.

And she drew the nail out gently, but she poured no ichor in; and instead the liquid fire spouted forth, like a stream of red-hot iron. And Talus tried to leap up, crying, “You have betrayed me, false witch-maiden!” But she lifted up her hands before him, and sang, till he sank beneath her spell. And as he sank, his brazen limbs clanked heavily, and the earth groaned

beneath his weight; and the liquid fire ran from his heel, like a stream of lava, to the sea; and Medea laughed, and called to the heroes, “Come ashore, and water your ship in peace.”

So they came, and found the giant lying dead; and they fell down, and kissed Medea’s feet; and watered their ship, and took sheep and oxen, and so left that inhospitable shore.

At last, after many more adventures, they came to the Cape of Malea, at the south-west point of the Peloponnese. And there they offered sacrifices, and Orpheus purged them from their guilt. Then they rode away again to the northward, past the Laconian shore, and came all worn and tired by Sunium, and up the long Euboean Strait, until they saw once more Pelion, and Aphetai, and Iolcos by the sea.

And they ran the ship ashore; but they had no strength left to haul her up the beach; and they crawled out on the pebbles, and sat down, and wept till they could weep no more. For the houses and the trees were all altered; and all the faces which they saw were strange; and their joy was swallowed up in sorrow, while they thought of their youth, and all their labour, and the gallant comrades they had lost.

And the people crowded round, and asked them “Who are you, that you sit weeping here?”

“We are the sons of your princes, who sailed out many a year ago. We went to fetch the golden fleece, and we have brought it, and grief therewith. Give us news of our fathers and our mothers, if any of them be left alive on earth.”

Then there was shouting, and laughing, and weeping; and all the kings came to the shore, and they led away the heroes to their homes, and bewailed the valiant dead.

Then Jason went up with Medea to the palace of his uncle Pelias. And when he came in Pelias sat by the hearth, crippled and blind with age; while opposite him sat Aeson, Jason’s father, crippled and blind likewise; and the two old men’s heads shook together as they tried to warm themselves before the fire.

And Jason fell down at his father’s knees, and wept, and called him by his name. And the old man stretched his hands out, and felt him, and said, “Do not mock me, young hero. My son Jason is dead long ago at sea.”

“I am your own son Jason, whom you trusted to the Centaur upon Pelion; and I have brought home the golden fleece, and a princess of the Sun’s race for my bride. So now give me up the kingdom, Pelias my uncle, and fulfil your promise as I have fulfilled mine.”

Then his father clung to him like a child, and wept, and would not let him go; and cried, “Now I shall not go down lonely to my grave. Promise me never to leave me till I die.”

# The End of the Heroes

**AND NOW I WISH** that I could end my story pleasantly; but it is no fault of mine that I cannot. The old songs end it sadly, and I believe that they are right and wise; for though the heroes were purified at Malea, yet sacrifices cannot make bad hearts good, and Jason had taken a wicked wife, and he had to bear his burden to the last.

And first she laid a cunning plot to punish that poor old Pelias, instead of letting him die in peace.

For she told his daughters, “I can make old things young again; I will show you how easy it is to do.”

So she took an old ram and killed him, and put him in a cauldron with magic herbs; and whispered her spells over him, and he leapt out again a young lamb. So that ‘Medea’s cauldron’ is a proverb still, by which we mean times of war and change, when the world has become old and feeble, and grows young again through bitter pains.

Then she said to Pelias’ daughters, “Do to your father as I did to this ram, and he will grow young and strong again.”

But she only told them half the spell; so they failed, while Medea mocked them; and poor old Pelias died, and his daughters came to misery. But the songs say she cured Aeson, Jason’s father, and he became young, and strong again.

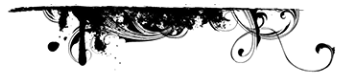
But Jason could not love her, after all her cruel deeds. So he was ungrateful to her, and wronged her; and she revenged herself on him. And a terrible revenge she took – too terrible to speak of here. But you will hear of it yourselves when you grow up, for it has been sung in noble poetry and music; and whether it be true or not, it stands for ever as a warning to us not to seek for help from evil persons, or to gain good ends by evil means. For if we use an adder even against our enemies, it will turn again and sting us.

And what became of Cheiron, the good immortal beast? That, too, is a sad story; for the heroes never saw him more. He was wounded by a poisoned arrow, at Pholoe among the hills, when Heracles opened the fatal

wine-jar, which Cheiron had warned him not to touch. And the Centaurs smelt the wine, and flocked to it, and fought for it with Heracles; but he killed them all with his poisoned arrows, and Cheiron was left alone. Then Cheiron took up one of the arrows, and dropped it by chance upon his foot; and the poison ran like fire along his veins, and he lay down and longed to die; and cried, ‘Through wine I perish, the bane of all my race. Why should I live for ever in this agony? Who will take my immortality, that I may die?’

Then Prometheus answered, the good Titan, whom Heracles had set free from Caucasus, “I will take your immortality and live for ever, that I may help poor mortal men.” So Cheiron gave him his immortality, and died, and had rest from pain. And Heracles and Prometheus wept over him, and went to bury him on Pelion; but Zeus took him up among the stars, to live for ever, grand and mild, low down in the far southern sky.

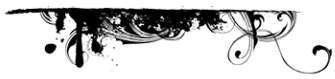
# TALES OF THESEUS



## Introduction

**THESEUS WAS BORN** to a mortal mother, but some accounts give him both a divine and mortal father – the sea god Posiedon and the King of Athens, Aegeus – though most agree on the abandonment of Theseus and his mother by Aegeus and Theseus' search to claim his true birthright in Athens. The idea of Theseus being both divine and mortal was a common feature of Greek heroes. The most famous account of Theseus is his slaying of the Minotaur, a creature that was half-bull, half-man and lived in an elaborate labyrinth. What follows is a retelling of the life of Theseus and his heroic acts from childhood until his retreat from power.

# The Wedding Of Aethra



**THERE LIVED** in Athens a young king, strong, brave, and beautiful, named Aegeus. Athens, which later became so great and famous, was then but a little town, perched on the top of a cliff which rises out of the plain, two or three miles from the sea. No doubt the place was chosen so as to be safe against pirates, who then used to roam all about the seas, plundering merchant ships, robbing cities, and carrying away men, women, and children, to sell as slaves. The Athenians had then no fleet with which to put the pirates down, and possessed not so much land as would make a large estate in England: other little free towns held the rest of the surrounding country.

King Aegeus was young, and desired to take a wife, indeed a wife had been found for him. But he wanted to be certain, if he could, that he was to have sons to succeed him: so many misfortunes happen to kings who have no children. But how was he to find out whether he should have children or not? At that time there were temples of the gods in various places, at which it was supposed that men might receive answers to their questions. These temples were called oracles, or places where oracles were given, and the most famous of them was the temple of Apollo at Pytho, or Delphi, far to the north-west of Athens. Here was a deep ravine of a steep mountain, where the god Apollo was said to have shot a monstrous dragon with his arrows. He then ordered that a temple should be built here, and in this temple a maiden, being inspired by the god, gave her prophecies. The people who came to consult her made the richest presents to the priests, and the temple was full of cups and bowls of gold and silver, and held more wealth in its chambers than the treasure houses of the richest kings.

Aegeus determined to go to Delphi to ask his question: would he have sons to come after him? He did not tell his people where he was going; he left the kingdom to be governed by his brother Pallas, and he set out secretly at night, taking no servant. He did not wear royal dress, and he drove his own chariot, carrying for his offering only a small cup of silver, for he did not wish it to be known that he was a king, and told the priests

that he was a follower of Peleus, King of Phthia. In answer to his question, the maiden sang two lines of verse, for she always prophesied in verse. Her reply was difficult to understand, as oracles often were, for the maiden seldom spoke out clearly, but in a kind of riddle that might be understood in more ways than one; so that, whatever happened, she could not be proved to have made a mistake.

Aegeus was quite puzzled by the answer he got. He did not return to Athens, but went to consult the prince of Troezene, named Pittheus, who was thought the wisest man then living. Pittheus did not know who Aegeus was, but saw that he seemed of noble birth, tall and handsome, so he received him very kindly, and kept him in his house for some time, entertaining him with feasts, dances, and hunting parties. Now Pittheus had a very lovely daughter, named Aethra. She and Aegeus fell in love with each other, so deeply that they desired to be married. It was the custom that the bridegroom should pay a price, a number of cattle, to the father of the bride, and Aegeus, of course, had no cattle to give. But it was also the custom, if the lover did some very brave and useful action, to reward him with the hand of his lady, and Aegeus had his opportunity. A fleet of pirates landed at Troezene and attacked the town, but Aegeus fought so bravely and led the men of Pittheus so well, that he not only slew the pirate chief, and defeated his men, but also captured some of his ships, which were full of plunder, gold, and bronze, and iron, and slaves. With this wealth Aegeus paid the bride price, as it was called, for Aethra, and they were married. Pittheus thought himself a lucky man, for he had no son, and here was a son-in-law who could protect his little kingdom, and wear the crown when he himself was dead.

Though Pittheus was believed to be very wise, in this matter he was very foolish. He never knew who Aegeus really was, that is the king of Athens, nor did poor Aethra know. In a short time Aegeus wearied of beautiful Aethra, who continued to love him dearly. He was anxious also to return to his kingdom, for he heard that his brother Pallas and his many sons were governing badly; and he feared that Pallas might keep the crown for himself, so he began to speak mysteriously to Aethra, talking about a long and dangerous journey which he was obliged to make, for secret reasons, and from which he might never return alive. Aethra wept bitterly, and sometimes thought, as people did in these days, that the beautiful stranger

might be no man, but a god, and that he might return to Olympus, the home of the gods, and forget her; for the gods never tarried long with the mortal women who loved them.

At last Aegeus took Aethra to a lonely glen in the woods, where, beside a little mountain stream, lay a great moss-grown boulder that an earthquake, long ago, had shaken from the rocky cliff above.

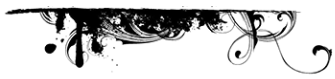
“The time is coming,” said Aegeus “when you and I must part, and only the gods can tell when we shall meet again! It may be that you will bear a child, and, if he be a boy, when he has come to his strength you must lead him to this great stone, and let no man or woman be there but you two only. You must then bid him roll away the stone, and, if he has no strength to raise it, so must it be. But if he can roll it away, then let him take such things as he finds there, and let him consider them well, and do what the gods put into his heart.”

Thus Aegeus spoke, and on the dawn of the third night after this day, when Aethra awoke from sleep, she did not find him by her side. She arose, and ran through the house, calling his name, but there came no answer, and from that time Aegeus was never seen again in Troezene, and people marvelled, thinking that he, who came whence no man knew, and was so brave and beautiful, must be one of the immortal gods.

“Who but a god,” they said, “would leave for no cause a bride, the flower of Greece for beauty, young, and loving; and a kingdom to which he was not born? Truly he must be Apollo of the silver bow, or Hermes of the golden wand.”

So they spoke among each other, and honoured Aethra greatly, but she pined and drooped with sorrow, like a tall lily flower, that the frost has touched in a rich man’s garden.

# The Boyhood of Theseus



**TIME WENT BY**, and Aethra had a baby, a son. This was her only comfort, and she thought that she saw in him a likeness to his father, whose true name she did not know. Certainly he was a very beautiful baby, well formed and strong, and, as soon as he could walk he was apt to quarrel with other children of his own age, and fight with them in a harmless way. He never was an amiable child, though he was always gentle to his mother. From the first he was afraid of nothing, and when he was about four or five he used to frighten his mother by wandering from home, with his little bow and arrows, and staying by himself in the woods. However, he always found his own way back again, sometimes with a bird or a snake that he had shot, and once dragging the body of a fawn that was nearly as heavy as himself. Thus his mother, from his early boyhood, had many fears for him, that he might be killed by some fierce wild boar in the woods, for he would certainly shoot at whatever beast he met; or that he might kill some other boy in a quarrel, when he would be obliged to leave the country. The other boys, however, soon learned not to quarrel with Theseus (so Aethra had named her son), for he was quick of temper, and heavy of hand, and, as for the wild beasts, he was cool as well as eager, and seemed to have an untaught knowledge of how to deal with them.

Aethra was therefore very proud of her son, and began to hope that when he was older he would be able to roll away the great stone in the glen. She told him nothing about it when he was little, but, in her walks with him in the woods or on the sea shore, she would ask him to try his force in lifting large stones. When he succeeded she kissed and praised him, and told him stories of the famous strong man, Heracles, whose name was well known through all Greece. Theseus could not bear to be beaten at lifting any weight, and, if he failed, he would rise early and try again in the morning, for many men, as soon as they rise from bed, can lift weights which are too heavy for them later in the day.

When Theseus was seven years old, Aethra found for him a tutor, named Connidas, who taught him the arts of netting beasts and hunting, and how

to manage the dogs, and how to drive a chariot, and wield sword and shield, and to throw the spear. Other things Connidas taught him which were known to few men in Greece, for Connidas came from the great rich island of Crete. He had killed a man there in a quarrel, and fled to Troezene to escape the revenge of the man's brothers and cousins. In Crete many people could read and write, which in Greece, perhaps none could do, and Connidas taught Theseus this learning.

When he was fifteen years old, Theseus went, as was the custom of young princes, to the temple of Delphi, not to ask questions, but to cut his long hair, and sacrifice it to the god, Apollo. He cut the forelock of his hair, so that no enemy, in battle, might take hold of it, for Theseus intended to fight at close quarters, hand to hand, in war, not to shoot arrows and throw spears from a distance. By this time he thought himself a man, and was always asking where his father was, while Aethra told him how her husband had left her soon after their marriage, and that she had never heard of him since, but that some day Theseus might find out all about him for himself, which no other person would ever be able to do.

Aethra did not wish to tell Theseus too soon the secret of the great stone, which hid she knew not what. She saw that he would leave her and go to seek his father, if he was able to raise the stone and find out the secret, and she could not bear to lose him, now that day by day he grew more like his father, her lost lover. Besides, she wanted him not to try to raise the stone till he came to his strength. But when he was in his nineteenth year, he told her that he would now go all over Greece and the whole world seeking for his father. She saw that he meant what he said, and one day she led him alone to the glen where the great stone lay, and sat down with him there, now talking, and now silent as if she were listening to the pleasant song of the burn that fell from a height into a clear deep pool. Really she was listening to make sure that no hunter and no lovers were near them in the wood, but she only heard the songs of the water and the birds, no voices, or cry of hounds, or fallen twig cracking under a footstep.

At last, when she was quite certain that nobody was near, she whispered, and told Theseus how her husband, before he disappeared, had taken her to this place, and shown her the great moss-grown boulder, and said that, when his son could lift that stone away, he would find certain tokens, and that he must then do what the gods put into his heart.

Theseus listened eagerly, and said, “If my father lifted that stone, and placed under it certain tokens, I also can lift it, perhaps not yet, but some day I shall be as strong a man as my father.”

Then he set himself to move the stone, gradually putting out all his force, but it seemed rooted in the earth, though he tried it now on one side and now on another. At last he flung himself at his mother’s feet, with his head in the grass, and lay without speaking. His breath came hard and quick, and his hands were bleeding.

Aethra laid her hand on his long hair, and was silent. “I shall not lose my boy this year,” she thought.

They were long in that lonely place, but at last Theseus rose, and kissed his mother, and stretched his arms.

“Not today!” he said, but his mother thought in her heart, “Not for many a day, I hope!”

Then they walked home to the house of Pittheus, saying little, and when they had taken supper, Theseus said that he would go to bed and dream of better fortune. So he arose, and went to his own chamber, which was built apart in the court of the palace, and soon Aethra too went to sleep, not unhappy, for her boy, she thought, would not leave her for a long time.

But in the night Theseus arose, and put on his shoes, and his smock, and a great double mantle. He girt on his sword of bronze, and went into the housekeeper’s chamber, where he took a small skin of wine, and some food. These he placed in a wallet which he slung round his neck by a cord, and, lastly he stole out of the court, and walked to the lonely glen, and to the pool in the burn near which the great stone lay. Here he folded his purple mantle of fine wool round him, and lay down to sleep in the grass, with his sword lying near his hand.

When he awoke the clear blue morning light was round him, and all the birds were singing their song to the dawn. Theseus arose, threw off his mantle and smock, and plunged into the cold pool of the burn, and then he drank a little of the wine, and ate of the bread and cold meat, and set himself to move the stone. At the first effort, into which he put all his strength, the stone stirred. With the second he felt it rise a little way from the ground, and then he lifted with all the might in his heart and body, and rolled the stone clean over.

Beneath it there was nothing but the fresh turned soil, but in a hollow of the foot of the rock, which now lay upper-most, there was a wrapping of purple woollen cloth, that covered something. Theseus tore out the packet, unwrapped the cloth, and found within it a wrapping of white linen. This wrapping was in many folds, which he undid, and at last he found a pair of shoon, such as kings wear, adorned with gold, and also the most beautiful sword that he had ever seen. The handle was of clear rock crystal, and through the crystal you could see gold, inlaid with pictures of a lion hunt done in different shades of gold and silver. The sheath was of leather, with patterns in gold nails, and the blade was of bronze, a beautiful pattern ran down the centre to the point, the blade was straight, and double edged, supple, sharp, and strong. Never had Theseus seen so beautiful a sword, nor one so well balanced in his hand.

He saw that this was a king's sword; and he thought that it had not been wrought in Greece, for in Greece was no sword-smith that could do such work. Examining it very carefully he found characters engraved beneath the hilt, not letters such as the Greeks used in later times, but such Cretan signs as Connidas had taught him to read, for many a weary hour, when he would like to have been following the deer in the forest.

Theseus pored over these signs till he read:

*Icmalius me made. Of Aegeus of Athens am I.*

Now he knew the secret. His father was Aegeus, the king of Athens. Theseus had heard of him and knew that he yet lived, a sad life full of trouble. For Aegeus had no child by his Athenian wife, and the fifty sons of his brother, Pallas (who were called the Pallantidae) despised him, and feasted all day in his hall, recklessly and fiercely, robbing the people, and Aegeus had no power in his own kingdom.

"Methinks that my father has need of me!" said Theseus to himself.

Then he wrapped up the sword and shoon in the linen and the cloth of wool, and walked home in the early morning to the palace of Pittheus.

When Theseus came to the palace, he went straight to the upper chamber of his mother, where she was spinning wool with a distaff of ivory. When he laid before her the sword and the shoon, the distaff fell from her hand, and she hid her head in a fold of her robe. Theseus kissed her hands and comforted her, and she dried her eyes, and praised him for his strength.

“These are the sword and the shoon of your father,” she said, “but truly the gods have taken away his strength and courage. For all men say that Aegeus of Athens is not master in his own house; his brother’s sons rule him, and with them Medea, the witch woman, that once was the wife of Jason.”

“The more he needs his son!” said Theseus. “Mother, I must go to help him, and be the heir of his kingdom, where you shall be with me always, and rule the people of Cecrops that fasten the locks of their hair with grasshoppers of gold.”

“So may it be, my child,” said Aethra, “if the gods go with you to protect you. But you will sail to Athens in a ship with fifty oarsmen, for the ways by land are long, and steep, and dangerous, beset by cruel giants and monstrous men.”

“Nay, mother,” said Theseus, “by land must I go, for I would not be known in Athens, till I see how matters fall out; and I would destroy these giants and robbers, and give peace to the people, and win glory among men. This very night I shall set forth.”

He had a sore and sad parting from his mother, but under cloud of night he went on his way, girt with the sword of Aegeus, his father, and carrying in his wallet the shoon with ornaments of gold.

# Adventures of Theseus

**THESEUS WALKED** through the night, and slept for most of the next day at a shepherd's hut. The shepherd was kind to him, and bade him beware of one called the Maceman, who guarded a narrow path with a sheer cliff above, and a sheer precipice below.

"No man born may deal with the Maceman," said the shepherd, "for his great club is of iron, that cannot be broken, and his strength is as the strength of ten men, though his legs have no force to bear his body. Men say that he is the son of the lame god, Hephaestus, who forged his iron mace; there is not the like of it in the world."

"Shall I fear a lame man?" said Theseus, "And is it not easy, even if he be so terrible a fighter, for me to pass him in the darkness, for I walk by night?"

The shepherd shook his head. "Few men have passed Periphetes the Maceman," said he, "and wiser are they who trust to swift ships than to the upland path."

"You speak kindly, father," said Theseus, "but I am minded to make the upland paths safe for all men."

So they parted, and Theseus walked through the sunset and the dusk, always on a rising path, and the further he went the harder it was to see the way, for the path was overgrown with grass, and the shadows were deepening. Night fell, and Theseus hardly dared to go further, for on his left hand was a wall of rock, and on his right hand a cliff sinking sheer and steep to the sea. But now he saw a light in front of him, a red light flickering, as from a great fire, and he could not be content till he knew why that fire was lighted. So he went on, slowly and warily, till he came in full view of the fire which covered the whole of a little platform of rock; on one side the blaze shone up the wall of cliff on his left hand, on the other was the steep fall to the sea. In front of this fire was a great black bulk; Theseus knew not what it might be. He walked forward till he saw that the black bulk was that of a monstrous man, who sat with his back to

the fire. The man nodded his heavy head, thick with red unshorn hair, and Theseus went up close to him.

"Ho, sir," he cried, "this is my road, and on my road I must pass!"

The seated man opened his eyes sleepily.

"Not without my leave," he said, "for I keep this way, I and my club of iron."

"Get up and begone!" said Theseus.

"That were hard for me to do," said the monstrous man, "for my legs will not bear the weight of my body, but my arms are strong enough."

"That is to be seen!" said Theseus, and he drew his sword, and leaped within the guard of the iron club that the monster, seated as he was, swung lightly to this side and that, covering the whole width of the path. The Maceman swung the club at Theseus, but Theseus sprang aside, and in a moment, before the monster could recover his stroke, drove through his throat the sword of Aegeus, and he fell back dead.

"He shall have his rights of fire, that his shadow may not wander outside the House of Hades," said Theseus to himself, and he toppled the body of the Maceman into his own great fire. Then he went back some way, and wrapping himself in his mantle, he slept till the sun was high in heaven, while the fire had sunk into its embers, and Theseus lightly sprang over them, carrying with him the Maceman's iron club. The path now led downwards, and a burn that ran through a green forest kept him company on the way, and brought him to pleasant farms and houses of men.

They marvelled to see him, a young man, carrying the club of the Maceman.

"Did you find him asleep?" they asked, and Theseus smiled and said, "No, I found him awake. But now he sleeps an iron sleep, from which he will never waken, and his body had due burning in his own watchfire."

Then the men and women praised Theseus, and wove for him a crown of leaves and flowers, and sacrificed sheep to the gods in heaven, and on the meat they dined, rejoicing that now they could go to Troezene by the hill path, for they did not love ships and the sea.

When they had eaten and drunk, and poured out the last cup of wine on the ground, in honour of Hermes, the God of Luck, the country people asked Theseus where he was going? He said that he was going to walk to Athens, and at this the people looked sad.

“No man may walk across the neck of land where Ephyre is built,” they said, “because above it Sinis the Pine-Bender has his castle, and watches the way.”

“And who is Sinis, and why does he bend pine trees?” asked Theseus.

“He is the strongest of men, and when he catches a traveller, he binds him hand and foot, and sets him between two pine trees. Then he bends them down till they meet, and fastens the traveller to the boughs of each tree, and lets them spring apart, so that the man is riven asunder.”

“Two can play at that game,” said Theseus, smiling, and he bade farewell to the kind country people, shouldered the iron club of Periphetes, and went singing on his way. The path led him over moors, and past farm-houses, and at last rose towards the crest of the hill whence he would see the place where two seas would have met, had they not been sundered by the neck of land which is now called the Isthmus of Corinth. Here the path was very narrow, with thick forests of pine trees on each hand, and “here,” thought Theseus to himself, “I am likely to meet the Pine-Bender.”

Soon he knew that he was right, for he saw the ghastly remains of dead men that the pine trees bore like horrible fruit, and presently the air was darkened overhead by the waving of vultures and ravens that prey upon the dead.

“I shall fight the better in the shade,” said Theseus, and he loosened the blade of the sword in its sheath, and raised the club of Periphetes aloft in his hand.

Well it was for him that he raised the iron club, for, just as he lifted it, there flew out from the thicket something long, and slim, and black, that fluttered above his head for a moment, and then a loop at the end of it fell round the head of Theseus, and was drawn tight with a sudden jerk. But the loop fell also above and round the club, which Theseus held firm, pushing away the loop, and so pushed it off that it did not grip his neck. Drawing with his left hand his bronze dagger, he cut through the leather lasso with one stroke, and bounded into the bushes from which it had flown. Here he found a huge man, clad in the skin of a lion, with its head fitting to his own like a mask. The man lifted a club made of the trunk of a young pine tree, with a sharp-edged stone fastened into the head of it like an axe-head. But, as the monster raised his long weapon it struck on a strong branch of a tree above him, and was entangled in the boughs, so that Theseus had

time to thrust the head of the iron club full in his face, with all his force, and the savage fell with a crash like a falling oak among the bracken. He was one of the last of an ancient race of savage men, who dwelt in Greece before the Greeks, and he fought as they had fought, with weapons of wood and stone.

Theseus dropped with his knees on the breast of the Pine-Bender, and grasped his hairy throat with both his hands, not to strangle him, but to hold him sure and firm till he came to himself again. When at last the monster opened his eyes, Theseus gripped his throat the harder, and spoke, “Pine-Bender, for thee shall pines be bent. But I am a man and not a monster, and thou shalt die a clean death before thy body is torn in twain to be the last feast of thy vultures.” Then, squeezing the throat of the wretch with his left hand, he drew the sword of Aegeus, and drove it into the heart of Sinis the Pine-Bender, and he gave a cry like a bull’s, and his soul fled from him. Then Theseus bound the body of the savage with his own leather cord, and, bending down the tops of two pine trees, he did to the corpse as Sinis had been wont to do to living men.

Lastly he cleaned the sword-blade carefully, wiping it with grass and bracken, and thrusting it to the hilt through the soft fresh ground under the trees, and so went on his way till he came to a little stream that ran towards the sea from the crest of the hill above the town of Ephyre, which is now called Corinth. But as he cleansed himself in the clear water, he heard a rustle in the boughs of the wood, and running with sword drawn to the place whence the sound seemed to come, he heard the whisper of a woman. Then he saw a strange sight. A tall and very beautiful girl was kneeling in a thicket, in a patch of asparagus thorn, and was weeping, and praying, in a low voice, and in a childlike innocent manner, to the thorns, begging them to shelter and defend her.

Theseus wondered at her, and, sheathing his sword, came softly up to her, and bade her have no fear. Then she threw her arms about his knees, and raised her face, all wet with tears, and bade him take pity upon her, for she had done no harm.

“Who are you, maiden? You are safe with me,” said Theseus. “Do you dread the Pine-Bender?”

“Alas, sir,” answered the girl, “I am his daughter, Perigyne, and his blood is on your hands.”

“Yet I do not war with women,” said Theseus, “though that has been done which was decreed by the gods. If you follow with me, you shall be kindly used, and marry, if you will, a man of a good house, being so beautiful as you are.”

When she heard this, the maiden rose to her feet, and would have put her hand in his. “Not yet,” said Theseus, kindly, “till water has clean washed away that which is between thee and me. But wherefore, maiden, being in fear as you were, did you not call to the gods in heaven to keep you, but to the asparagus thorns that cannot hear or help?”

“My father, sir,” she said, “knew no gods, but he came of the race of the asparagus thorns, and to them I cried in my need.”

Theseus marvelled at these words, and said, “From this day you shall pray to Zeus, the Lord of Thunder, and to the other gods.” Then he went forth from the wood, with the maiden following, and wholly cleansed himself in the brook that ran by the way.

So they passed down to the rich city of Ephyre, where the king received him gladly, when he heard of the slaying of the Maceman, Periphetes, and of Sinis the Pine-Bender. The Queen, too, had pity on Perigyne, so beautiful she was, and kept her in her own palace. Afterwards Perigyne married a prince, Deiones, son of Eurytus, King of Oechalia, whom the strong man Heracles slew for the sake of his bow, the very bow with which Odysseus, many years afterwards, destroyed the Wooers in his halls. The sons of Perigyne and Deiones later crossed the seas to Asia, and settled in a land called Caria, and they never burned or harmed the asparagus thorn to which Perigyne had prayed in the thicket.

Greece was so lawless in these days that all the road from Troezene northward to Athens was beset by violent and lawless men. They loved cruelty even more than robbery, and each of them had carefully thought out his particular style of being cruel. The cities were small, and at war with each other, or at war among themselves, one family fighting against another for the crown. Thus there was no chance of collecting an army to destroy the monstrous men of the roads, which it would have been easy enough for a small body of archers to have done. Later Theseus brought all into great order, but now, being but one man, he went seeking adventures.

On the border of a small country called Megara, whose people were much despised in Greece, he found a chance of advancing himself, and

gaining glory. He was walking in the middle of the day along a narrow path at the crest of a cliff above the sea, when he saw the flickering of a great fire in the blue air, and steam going up from a bronze caldron of water that was set on the fire. On one side of the fire was a foot-bath of glittering bronze. Hard by was built a bower of green branches, very cool on that hot day, and from the door of the bower stretched a great thick hairy pair of naked legs.

Theseus guessed, from what he had been told, that the owner of the legs was Sciron the Kicker. He was a fierce outlaw who was called the Kicker because he made all travellers wash his feet, and, as they were doing so, kicked them over the cliff. Some say that at the foot of the cliff dwelt an enormous tortoise, which ate the dead and dying when they fell near his lair, but as tortoises do not eat flesh, generally, this may be a mistake. Theseus was determined not to take any insolence from Sciron, so he shouted:

"Slave, take these dirty legs of yours out of the way of a Prince."

"Prince!" answered Sciron, "If my legs are dirty, the gods are kind who have sent you to wash them for me."

Then he got up, lazily, laughing and showing his ugly teeth, and stood in front of his bath with his heavy wooden club in his hand. He whirled it round his head insultingly, but Theseus was quicker than he, and again, as when he slew the Pine-Bender, he did not strike, for striking is slow compared to thrusting, but like a flash he lunged forward and drove the thick end of his iron club into the breast of Sciron. He staggered, and, as he reeled, Theseus dealt him a blow across the thigh, and he fell. Theseus seized the club which dropped from the hand of Sciron, and threw it over the cliff; it seemed long before the sound came up from the rocks on which it struck.

"A deep drop into a stony way, Sciron," said Theseus, "now wash my feet! Stand up, and turn your back to me, and be ready when I tell you."

Sciron rose, slowly and sulkily, and stood as Theseus bade him do.

Now Theseus was not wearing light shoes or sandals, like the golden sandals of Aegeus, which he carried in his wallet. He was wearing thick boots, with bronze nails in the soles, and the upper leathers were laced high up his legs, for the Greeks wore such boots when they took long walks on mountain roads. As soon as Theseus had trained Sciron to stand

in the proper position, he bade him stoop to undo the lacings of his boots. As Sciron stooped, Theseus gave him one tremendous kick, that lifted him over the edge of the cliff, and there was an end of Sciron.

Theseus left the marches of Megara, and walked singing on his way, above the sea, for his heart was light, and he was finding adventures to his heart's desire. Being so young and well trained, his foot and hand, in a combat, moved as swift as lightning, and his enemies were older than he, and, though very strong, were heavy with full feeding, and slow to move. Now it is speed that wins in a fight, whether between armies or single men, if strength and courage go with it.

At last the road led Theseus down from the heights to a great fertile plain, called the Thriasian plain, not far from Athens. There, near the sea, stands the famous old city of Eleusis. When Hades, the God of the Dead, carried away beautiful Persephone, the daughter of Demeter, the Goddess of corn and all manner of grain, to his dark palace beside the stream of Ocean, it was to Eleusis that Demeter wandered. She was clad in mourning robes, and she sat down on a stone by the way, like a weary old woman. Now the three daughters of the king who then reigned in Eleusis came by, on the way to the well, to fetch water, and when they saw the old woman they set down their vessels and came round her, asking what they could do for her, who was so tired and poor. They said that they had a baby brother at home, who was the favourite of them all, and that he needed a nurse. Demeter was pleased with their kindness, and they left their vessels for water beside her, and ran home to their mother. Their long golden hair danced on their shoulders as they ran, and they came, out of breath, to their mother the Queen, and asked her to take the old woman to be their brother's nurse. The Queen was kind, too, and the old woman lived in their house, till Zeus, the chief God, made the God of the Dead send back Persephone, to be with her mother through spring, and summer, and early autumn, but in winter she must live with her husband in the dark palace beside the river of Ocean.

Then Demeter was glad, and she caused the grain to grow abundantly for the people of Eleusis, and taught them ceremonies, and a kind of play in which all the story of her sorrows and joy was acted. It was also taught that the souls of men do not die with the death of their bodies, any more than the seed of corn dies when it is buried in the dark earth, but that they

live again in a world more happy and beautiful than ours. These ceremonies were called the Mysteries of Eleusis, and were famous in all the world.

Theseus might have expected to find Eleusis a holy city, peaceful and quiet. But he had heard, as he travelled, that in Eleusis was a strong bully, named Cercyon; he was one of the rough Highlanders of Arcadia, who lived in the hills of the centre of Southern Greece, which is called Peloponnesus. He is said to have taken the kingship, and driven out the descendants of the king whose daughters were kind to Demeter. The strong man used to force all strangers to wrestle with him, and, when he threw them, for he had never been thrown, he broke their backs.

Knowing this, and being himself fond of wrestling, Theseus walked straight to the door of the king's house, though the men in the town warned him, and the women looked at him with sad eyes. He found the gate of the courtyard open, with the altar of Zeus the high God smoking in the middle of it, and at the threshold two servants welcomed him, and took him to the polished bath, and women washed him, and anointed him with oil, and clothed him in fresh raiment, as was the manner in kings' houses. Then they led him into the hall, and he walked straight up to the high seats between the four pillars beside the hearth, in the middle of the hall.

There Cercyon sat, eating and drinking, surrounded by a score of his clan, great, broad, red-haired men, but he himself was the broadest and the most brawny. He welcomed Theseus, and caused a table to be brought, with meat, and bread, and wine, and when Theseus had put away his hunger, began to ask him who he was and whence he came. Theseus told him that he had walked from Troezene, and was on his way to the court of King Peleus (the father of Achilles), in the north, for he did not want the news of his coming to go before him to Athens.

"You walked from Troezene?" said Cercyon. "Did you meet or hear of the man who killed the Maceman and slew the Pine-Bender, and kicked Sciron into the sea?"

"I walk fast, but news flies faster," said Theseus.

"The news came through my second-sighted man," said Cercyon, "there he is, in the corner," and Cercyon threw the leg bone of an ox at his prophet, who just managed to leap out of the way. "He seems to have foreseen that the bone was coming at him," said Cercyon, and all his

friends laughed loud. “He told us this morning that a stranger was coming, he who had killed the three watchers of the way. From your legs and shoulders, and the iron club that you carry, methinks you are that stranger?”

Theseus smiled, and nodded upwards, which the Greeks did when they meant ‘Yes!’

“Praise be to all the gods!” said Cercyon. “It is long since a good man came my way. Do they practise wrestling at Troezene?”

“Now and then,” said Theseus.

“Then you will try a fall with me? There is a smooth space strewn with sand in the courtyard.”

Theseus answered that he had come hoping that the king would graciously honour him by trying a fall. Then all the wild guests shouted, and out they all went and made a circle round the wrestling-place, while Theseus and Cercyon threw down their clothes and were anointed with oil over their bodies. To it they went, each straining forward and feeling for a grip, till they were locked, and then they swayed this way and that, their feet stamping the ground; and now one would yield a little, now the other, while the rough guests shouted, encouraging each of them. At last they rested and breathed, and now the men began to bet; seven oxen to three was laid on Cercyon, and taken in several places. Back to the wrestle they went, and Theseus found this by far the hardest of his adventures, for Cercyon was heavier than he, and as strong, but not so active. So Theseus for long did little but resist the awful strain of the arms of Cercyon, till, at last, for a moment Cercyon weakened. Then Theseus slipped his hip under the hip of Cercyon, and heaved him across and up, and threw him on the ground. He lighted in such a way that his neck broke, and there he lay dead.

“Was it fairly done?” said Theseus.

“It was fairly done!” cried the Highlanders of Arcadia; and then they raised such a wail for the dead that Theseus deemed it wise to put on his clothes and walk out of the court; and, leaping into a chariot that stood empty by the gate, for the servant in the chariot feared the club of iron, he drove away at full speed.

Though Cercyon was a cruel man and a wild, Theseus was sorry for him in his heart.

The groom in the chariot tried to leap out, but Theseus gripped him tight. “Do not hurry, my friend,” said Theseus, “for I have need of you. I am not stealing the chariot and horses, and you shall drive them back after we reach Athens.”

“But, my lord,” said the groom, “you will never reach Athens.”

“Why not?” asked Theseus.

“Because of the man Procrustes, who dwells in a strong castle among the hills on the way. He is the maimer of all mortals, and has at his command a company of archers and spearmen, pirates from the islands. He meets every traveller, and speaks to him courteously, praying him to be his guest, and if any refuses the archers leap out of ambush and seize and bind him. With them no one man can contend. He has a bed which he says is a thing magical, for it is of the same length as the tallest or the shortest man who sleeps in it, so that all are fitted. Now the manner of it is this – there is an engine with ropes at the head of the bed, and a saw is fitted at the bed foot. If a man is too short, the ropes are fastened to his hands, and are strained till he is drawn to the full length of the bed. If he is too long the saw shortens him. Such a monster is Procrustes.

“Verily, my lord, King Cercyon was tomorrow to lead an army against him, and the King had a new device, as you may see, by which two great shields are slung along the side of this chariot, to ward off the arrows of the men of Procrustes.”

“Then you and I will wear the shields when we come near the place where Procrustes meets travellers by the way, and I think that tonight his own bed will be too long for him,” said Theseus.

To this the groom made no answer, but his body trembled.

Theseus drove swiftly on till the road began to climb the lowest spur of Mount Parnes, and then he drew rein, and put on one of the great shields that covered all his body and legs, and he bade the groom do the like. Then he drove slowly, watching the bushes and underwood beside the way. Soon he saw the smoke going up from the roof of a great castle high in the woods beside the road; and on the road there was a man waiting. Theseus, as he drove towards him, saw the glitter of armour in the underwood, and the setting sun shone red on a spear-point above the leaves.

“Here is our man,” he said to the groom, and pulled up his horses beside the stranger. He loosened his sword in the sheath, and leaped out of the

chariot, holding the reins in his left hand, and bowed courteously to the man, who was tall, weak-looking, and old, with grey hair and a clean-shaven face, the colour of ivory. He was clad like a king, in garments of dark silk, with gold bracelets, and gold rings that clasped the leather gaiters on his legs, and he smiled and smiled, and rubbed his hands, while he looked to right and left, and not at Theseus.

"I am fortunate, fair sir," said he to Theseus, "for I love to entertain strangers, with whom goes the favour and protection of Zeus. Surely strangers are dear to all men, and holy! You, too, are not unlucky, for the night is falling, and the ways will be dark and dangerous. You will sup and sleep with me, and tonight I can give you a bed that is well spoken of, for its nature is such that it fits all men, the short and the tall, and you are of the tallest."

"Tonight, fair sir," quoth Theseus, "your own bed will be full long for you." And, drawing the sword of Aegeus, he cut sheer through the neck of Procrustes at one blow, and the head of the man flew one way, and his body fell another way.

Then with a swing of his hand Theseus turned his shield from his front to his back, and leaped into the chariot. He lashed the horses forward with a cry, while the groom also turned his own shield from front to back; and the arrows of the bowmen of Procrustes rattled on the bronze shields as the chariot flew along, or struck the sides and the seat of it. One arrow grazed the flank of a horse, and the pair broke into a wild gallop, while the yells of the bowmen grew faint in the distance. At last the horses slackened in their pace as they climbed a hill, and from the crest of it Theseus saw the lights in the city of Aphidnae.

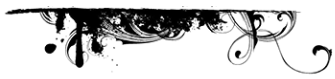
"Now, my friend," he said to the groom, "the way is clear to Athens, and on your homeward road with the horses and the chariot you shall travel well guarded. By the splendour of Lady Athene's brow, I will burn that raven's nest of Procrustes!"

So they slept that night on safe beds at the house of the sons of Phytalus, who bore rule in Aphidnae. Here they were kindly welcomed, and the sons of Phytalus rejoiced when they heard how Theseus had made safe the ways, and slain the beasts that guarded them.

"We are your men," they said, "we and all our people, and our spears will encircle you when you make yourself King of Athens, and of all the cities

in the Attic land.”

# Theseus Finds His Father



**NEXT DAY THESEUS** said farewell to the sons of Phytalus, and drove slowly through the pleasant green woods that overhung the clear river Cephisus. He halted to rest his horses in a glen, and saw a very beautiful young man walking in a meadow on the other side of the river. In his hand he bore a white flower, and the root of it was black; in the other hand he carried a golden wand, and his upper lip was just beginning to darken, he was of the age when youth is most gracious. He came towards Theseus, and crossed the stream where it broke deep, and swift, and white, above a long pool, and it seemed to Theseus that his golden shoon did not touch the water.

"Come, speak with me apart," the young man said; and Theseus threw the reins to the groom, and went aside with the youth, watching him narrowly, for he knew not what strange dangers might beset him on the way.

"Whither art thou going, unhappy one," said the youth, "thou that knowest not the land? Behold, the sons of Pallas rule in Athens, fiercely and disorderly. Thy father is of no force, and in the house with him is a fair witch woman from a far country. Her name is Medea, the daughter of Aeetes, the brother of Circe the Sorceress. She wedded the famous Jason, and won for him the Fleece of Gold, and slew her own brother Absyrtus. Other evils she wrought, and now she dwells with Aegeus, who fears and loves her greatly. Take thou this herb of grace, and if Medea offers you a cup of wine, drop this herb in the cup, and so you shall escape death. Behold, I am Hermes of the golden wand."

Then he gave to Theseus the flower, and passed into the wood, and Theseus saw him no more; so then Theseus knelt down, and prayed, and thanked the gods. The flower he placed in the breast of his garment, and, returning to his chariot, he took the reins, and drove to Athens, and up the steep narrow way to the crest of the rock where the temple of Athene stood and the palace of King Aegeus.

Theseus drove through to the courtyard, and left his chariot at the gate. In the court young men were throwing spears at a mark, while others sat at

the house door, playing draughts, and shouting and betting. They were heavy, lumpish, red-faced young men, all rather like each other. They looked up and stared, but said nothing. Theseus knew that they were his cousins, the sons of Pallas, but as they said nothing to him he walked through them, iron club on shoulder, as if he did not see them, and as one tall fellow stood in his way, the tall fellow spun round from a thrust of his shoulder. At the hall door Theseus stopped and shouted, and at his cry two or three servants came to him.

"Look to my horses and man," said Theseus; "I come to see your master."

And in he went, straight up to the high chairs beside the fire in the centre. The room was empty, but in a high seat sat, fallen forward and half-asleep, a man in whose grey hair was a circlet of gold and a golden grasshopper. Theseus knew that it was his father, grey and still, like the fallen fire on the hearth. As the king did not look up, Theseus touched his shoulder, and then knelt down, and put his arms round the knees of the king. The king aroused himself with a start.

"Who? What want you?" he said, and rubbed his red, bloodshot eyes.

"A suppliant from Troezene am I, who come to your knees, oh, king, and bring you gifts."

"From Troezene!" said the king sleepily, as if he were trying to remember something.

"From Aethra, your wife, your son brings your sword and your shoon," said Theseus; and he laid the sword and the shoon at his father's feet.

The king rose to his feet with a great cry. "You have come at last," he cried, "and the gods have forgiven me and heard my prayers. But gird on the sword, and hide the shoon, and speak not the name of 'wife,' for there is one that hears."

"One that has heard," said a sweet silvery voice; and from behind a pillar came a woman, dark and pale, but very beautiful, clothed in a rich Eastern robe that shone and shifted from colour to colour. Lightly she threw her white arms round the neck of Theseus, lightly she kissed his cheeks, and a strange sweet fragrance hung about her. Then, holding him apart, with her hands on his shoulders, she laughed, and half-turning to Aegeus, who had fallen back into his chair, she said: "My lord, did you think that you could

hide anything from me?" Then she fixed her great eyes on the eyes of Theseus. "We are friends?" she said, in her silvery voice.

"Lady, I love you even as you love my father, King Aegeus," said Theseus.

"Even so much?" said the lady Medea. "Then we must both drink to him in wine."

She glided to the great golden mixing-cup of wine that stood on a table behind Aegeus, and with her back to Theseus she ladled wine into a cup of strange coloured glass.

"Pledge me and the king," she said, bringing the cup to Theseus. He took it, and from his breast he drew the flower of black root and white blossom that Hermes had given him, and laid it in the wine. Then the wine bubbled and hissed, and the cup burst and broke, and the wine fell on the floor, staining it as with blood.

Medea laughed lightly. "Now we are friends indeed, for the gods befriend you," she said, "and I swear by the Water of Styx that your friends are my friends, and your foes are my foes, always, to the end. The gods are with you; and by the great oath of the gods I swear, which cannot be broken; for I come of the kin of the gods who live for ever."

Now the father of the father of Medea was the Sun God.

Theseus took both her hands. "I also swear," he said, "by the splendour of Zeus, that your friends shall be my friends, and that your foes shall be my foes, always, to the end."

Then Medea sat by the feet of Aegeus, and drew down his head to her shoulder, while Theseus took hold of his hand, and the king wept for joy. For the son he loved, and the woman whom he loved and feared, were friends, and they two were stronger than the sons of Pallas.

While they sat thus, one of the sons of Pallas – the Pallantidae they were called – slouched into the hall to see if dinner was ready. He stared, and slouched out again, and said to his brothers: "The old man is sitting in the embraces of the foreign woman, and of the big stranger with the iron club!" Then they all came together, and growled out their threats and fears, kicking at the stones in the courtyard, and quarrelling as to what it was best for them to do.

Meanwhile, in the hall, the servants began to spread the tables with meat and drink, and Theseus was taken to the bath, and clothed in new raiment.

While Theseus was at the bath Medea told Aegeus what he ought to do. So when Theseus came back into the hall, where the sons of Pallas were eating and drinking noisily, Aegeus stood up, and called to Theseus to sit down at his right hand. He added, in a loud voice, looking all round the hall: “This is my son, Theseus, the slayer of monsters, and his is the power in the house!”

The sons of Pallas grew pale with fear and anger, but not one dared to make an insolent answer. They knew that they were hated by the people of Athens, except some young men of their own sort, and they did not dare to do anything against the man who had slain Periphetes and Sinis, and Cercyon, and Sciron, and, in the midst of his paid soldiers, had struck off the head of Procrustes. Silent all through dinner sat the sons of Pallas, and, when they had eaten, they walked out silently, and went to a lonely place, where they could make their plans without being overheard.

Theseus went with Medea into her fragrant chamber, and they spake a few words together. Then Medea took a silver bowl, filled it with water, and, drawing her dark silken mantle over her head, she sat gazing into the bowl. When she had gazed silently for a long time she said: “Some of them are going towards Sphettus, where their father dwells, to summon his men in arms, and some are going to Gargettus on the other side of the city, to lie in ambush, and cut us off when they of Sphettus assail us. They will attack the palace just before the dawn. Now I will go through the town, and secretly call the trusty men to arm and come to defend the palace, telling them that the son of Aegeus, the man who cleared the ways, is with us. And do you take your chariot, and drive speedily to the sons of Phytalus, and bring all their spears, chariot men and foot men, and place them in ambush around the village of Gargettus, where one band of the Pallantidae will lie tonight till dawn. The rest you know.”

Theseus nodded and smiled. He drove at full speed to Aphidnae, where the sons of Phytalus armed their men, and by midnight they lay hidden in the woods round the village of Gargettus. When the stars had gone onward, and the second of the three watches of the night was nearly past, they set bands of men to guard every way from the little town, and Theseus with another band rushed in, and slew the men of the sons of Pallas around their fires, some of them awake, but most of them asleep. Those who escaped were taken by the bands who watched the ways, and when the sky was now

clear at the earliest dawn, Theseus led his companions to the palace of Aegeus, where they fell furiously upon the rear of the men from Sphettus, who were besieging the palace of Aegeus.

The Sphettus company had broken in the gate of the court, and were trying to burn the house, while arrows flew thick from the bows of the trusty men of Athens on the palace roof. The Pallantids had set no sentinels, for they thought to take Theseus in the palace, and there to burn him, and win the kingdom for themselves. Then silently and suddenly the friends of Theseus stole into the courtyard, and, leaving some to guard the gate, they drew up in line, and charged the confused crowd of the Pallantids. Their spears flew thick among the enemy, and then they charged with the sword, while the crowd, in terror, ran this way and that way, being cut down at the gate, and dragged from the walls, when they tried to climb them. The daylight found the Pallantidae and their men lying dead in the courtyard, all the sort of them.

Then Theseus with the sons of Phytalus and their company marched through the town, proclaiming that the rightful prince was come, and that the robbers and oppressors were fallen, and all honest men rejoiced. They burned the dead, and buried their ashes and bones, and for the rest of that day they feasted in the hall of Aegeus. Next day Theseus led his friends back to Aphidnae, and on the next day they attacked and stormed the castle of Procrustes, and slew the pirates, and Theseus divided all the rich plunder among the sons of Phytalus and their company, but the evil bed they burned to ashes.

# Heralds Come for Tribute

**THE DAYS AND WEEKS** went by, and Theseus reigned with his father in peace. The chief men came to Athens from the little towns in the country, and begged Theseus to be their lord, and they would be his men, and he would lead their people if any enemy came up against them. They would even pay tribute to be used for buying better arms, and making strong walls, and providing ships, for then the people of Athens had no navy. Theseus received them courteously, and promised all that they asked, for he did not know that soon he himself would be sent away as part of the tribute which the Athenians paid every nine years to King Minos of Crete.

Though everything seemed to be peaceful and happy through the winter, yet Theseus felt that all was not well. When he went into the houses of the town's people, where all had been merry and proud of his visits, he saw melancholy, silent mothers, and he missed the young people, lads and maidens. Many of them were said to have gone to visit friends in far-away parts of Greece. The elder folk, and the young people who were left, used to stand watching the sea all day, as if they expected something strange to come upon them from the sea, and Aegeus sat sorrowful over the fire, speaking little, and he seemed to be in fear.

Theseus was disturbed in his mind, and he did not choose to put questions to Aegeus or to the townsfolk. He and Medea were great friends, and one day when they were alone in her chamber, where a fragrant fire of cedar wood burned, he told her what he had noticed. Medea sighed, and said: "The curse of the sons of Pallas is coming upon the people of Athens – such a curse and so terrible that not even you, Prince Theseus, can deal with it. The enemy is not one man or one monster only, but the greatest and most powerful king in the world."

"Tell me all," said Theseus, "for though I am but one man, yet the ever-living gods protect and help me."

"The story of the curse is long," said Medea. "When your father Aegeus was young, after he returned to Athens from Troezene, he decreed that games should be held every five years, contests in running, boxing,

wrestling, foot races, and chariot races. Not only the people of Athens, but strangers were allowed to take part in the games, and among the strangers came Androgeos, the eldest son of great Minos, King of Cnossos, in the isle of Crete of the Hundred Cities, far away in the southern sea. Minos is the wisest of men, and the most high god, even Zeus, is his counsellor, and speaks to him face to face. He is the richest of men, and his ships are without number, so that he rules all the islands, and makes war, when he will, even against the King of Egypt. The son of Minos it was who came to the sports with three fair ships, and he was the strongest and swiftest of men. He won the foot race, and the prizes for boxing and wrestling, and for shooting with the bow, and throwing the spear, and hurling the heavy weight, and he easily overcame the strongest of the sons of Pallas.

"Then, being unjust men and dishonourable, they slew him at a feast in the hall of Aegeus, their own guest in the king's house they slew, a thing hateful to the gods above all other evil deeds. His ships fled in the night, bearing the news to King Minos, and, a year after that day, the sea was black with his countless ships. His men landed, and they were so many, all glittering in armour of bronze, that none dared to meet them in battle. King Aegeus and all the elder men of the city went humbly to meet Minos, clad in mourning, and bearing in their hands boughs of trees, wreathed with wool, to show that they came praying for mercy. 'Mercy ye shall have when ye have given up to me the men who slew my son,' said Minos. But Aegeus could not give up the sons of Pallas, for long ago they had fled in disguise, and were lurking here and there, in all the uttermost parts of Greece, in the huts of peasants. Such mercy, then, the Athenians got as Minos was pleased to give. He did not burn the city, and slay the men, and carry the women captives. But he made Aegeus and the chief men swear that every nine years they would choose by lot seven of the strongest youths, and seven of the fairest maidens, and give them to his men, to carry away to Crete. Every nine years he sends a ship with dark sails, to bear away the captives, and this is the ninth year, and the day of the coming of the ship is at hand. Can you resist King Minos?"

"His ship we could burn, and his men we could slay," said Theseus; and his hand closed on the hilt of his sword.

"That may well be," said Medea, "but in a year Minos would come with his fleet and his army, and burn the city; and the other cities of Greece,

fearing him and not loving us, would give us no aid."

"Then," said Theseus, "we must even pay the tribute for this last time; but in nine years, if I live, and the gods help me, I shall have a fleet, and Minos must fight for his tribute. For in nine years Athens will be queen of all the cities round about, and strong in men and ships. Yet, tell me, how does Minos treat the captives from Athens, kindly or unkindly?"

"None has ever come back to tell the tale," said Medea, "but the sailors of Minos say that he places the captives in a strange prison called the Labyrinth. It is full of dark winding ways, cut in the solid rock, and therein the captives are lost and perish of hunger, or live till they meet a Thing called the Minotaur. This monster has the body of a strong man, and a man's legs and arms, but his head is the head of a bull, and his teeth are the teeth of a lion, and no man may deal with him. Those whom he meets he tosses, and gores, and devours. Whence this evil beast came I know, but the truth of it may not be spoken. It is not lawful for King Minos to slay the Horror, which to him is great shame and grief; neither may he help any man to slay it. Therefore, in his anger against the Athenians he swore that, once in every nine years, he would give fourteen of the Athenian men and maidens to the Thing, and that none of them should bear sword or spear, dagger or axe, or any other weapon. Yet, if one of the men, or all of them together, could slay the monster, Minos made oath that Athens should be free of him and his tribute."

Theseus laughed and stood up. "Soon," he said, "shall King Minos be free from the Horror, and Athens shall be free from the tribute, if, indeed, the gods be with me. For me need no lot be cast; gladly I will go to Crete of my free will."

"I needed not to be a prophetess to know that you would speak thus," said Medea. "But one thing even I can do. Take this phial, and bear it in your breast, and, when you face the Minotaur, do as I shall tell you." Then she whispered some words to Theseus, and he marked them carefully.

He went forth from Medea's bower; he walked to the crest of the hill upon which Athens is built, and there he saw all the people gathered, weeping, and looking towards the sea. Swiftly a ship with black sails was being rowed towards the shore, and her sides shone with the bronze shields of her crew, that were hung on the bulwarks.

“My friends,” cried Theseus, “I know that ship, and wherefore she comes, and with her I shall sail to Crete and slay the Minotaur. Did I not slay Sinis and Sciron, Cercyon and Procrustes, and Periphetes? Let there be no drawing of lots. Where are seven men and seven maidens who will come with me, and meet these Cretans when they land, and sail back with them, and see this famous Crete, for the love of Theseus?”

Then there stepped forth seven young men of the best of Athens, tall, and strong, and fair, the ancestors of them who smote, a thousand years afterwards, the Persians at Marathon and in the strait of Salamis. “We will live or die with you, Prince Theseus,” they said.

Next, one by one, came out of the throng, blushing, but with heads erect and firm steps, the seven maidens whom the seven young men loved. They, too, were tall, and beautiful, and stately, like the stone maidens called Caryatides who bear up the roofs of temples.

“We will live and die with you, Prince Theseus, and with our lovers,” they cried; and all the people gave such a cheer that King Aegeus heard it, and came from his palace, leaning on his staff, and Medea walked beside him.

“Why do you raise a glad cry, my children?” said Aegeus. “Is not that the Ship of Death, and must we not cast lots for the tribute to King Minos?”

“Sir,” said Theseus, “we rejoice because we go as free folk, of our own will, these men and maidens and I, to take such fortune as the gods may give us, and to do as well as we may. Nay, delay us not, for from this hour shall Athens be free, without master or lord among Cretan men.”

“But, my son, who shall defend me, who shall guide me, when I have lost thee, the light of mine eyes, and the strength of my arm?” whimpered Aegeus.

“Is the king weeping alone, while the fathers and mothers of my companions have dry eyes?” said Theseus. “The gods will be your helpers, and the lady who is my friend, and who devised the slaying of the sons of Pallas. Hers was the mind, if the hand was my own, that wrought their ruin. Let her be your counsellor, for no other is so wise. But that ship is near the shore, and we must go.”

Then Theseus embraced Aegeus, and Medea kissed him, and the young men and maidens kissed their fathers and mothers, and said farewell. With Theseus at their head they marched down the hill, two by two; but Medea

sent after them chariots laden with changes of raiment, and food, and skins of wine, and all things of which they had need. They were to sail in their own hired ship, for such was the custom, and the ship was ready with her oarsmen. But Theseus and the Seven, by the law of Minos, might carry no swords or other weapons of war. The ship had a black sail, but Aegeus gave to the captain a sail dyed scarlet with the juice of the scarlet oak, and bade him hoist it if he was bringing back Theseus safe, but, if not, to return under the black sail.

The captain, and the outlook man, and the crew, and the ship came all from the isle of Salamis, for as yet the Athenians had no vessels fit for long voyages – only fishing-boats. As Theseus and his company marched along they met the herald of King Minos, bearing a sacred staff, for heralds were holy, and to slay a herald was a deadly sin. He stopped when he met Theseus, and wondered at his beauty and strength. “My lord,” said he, “wherefore come you with the Fourteen? Know you to what end they are sailing?”

“That I know not, nor you, nor any man, but they and I are going to one end, such as the gods may give us,” answered Theseus. “Speak with me no more, I pray you, and go no nearer Athens, for there men’s hearts are high today, and they carry swords.”

The voice and the eyes of Theseus daunted the herald, and he with his men turned and followed behind, humbly, as if they were captives and Theseus were conqueror.

# Theseus in Crete

**AFTER MANY DAYS' SAILING**, now through the straits under the beautiful peaks of the mountains that crowned the islands, and now across the wide sea far from sight of land, they beheld the crest of Mount Ida of Crete, and ran into the harbour, where a hundred ships lay at anchor, and a great crowd was gathered. Theseus marvelled at the ships, so many and so strong, and at the harbour with its huge walls, while he and his company landed. A hundred of the guardsmen of Minos, with large shields, and breastplates made of ribs of bronze, and helmets of bronze with horns on them, were drawn up on the pier. They surrounded the little company of Athenians, and they all marched to the town of Cnossos, and the palace of the king.

If Theseus marvelled at the harbour he wondered yet more at the town. It was so great that it seemed endless, and round it went a high wall, and at every forty yards was a square tower with small square windows high up. These towers were exactly like those which you may see among the hills and beside the burns in the Border country, the south of Scotland and the north of England; towers built when England and Scotland were at war. But when they had passed through the gateway in the chief tower, the town seemed more wonderful than the walls, for in all things it was quite unlike the cities of Greece. The street, paved with flat paving stones, wound between houses like our own, with a ground floor (in this there were no windows) and with two or three stories above, in which there were windows, with sashes, and with so many panes to each window, the panes were coloured red. Each window opened on a balcony, and the balconies were crowded with ladies in gay dresses like those which are now worn. Under their hats their hair fell in long plaits over their shoulders: they had very fine white blouses, short jackets, embroidered in bright coloured silk, and skirts with flounces. Laughing merrily they looked down at the little troop of prisoners, chatting, and some saying they were sorry for the Athenian girls. Others, seeing Theseus marching first, a head taller than

the tallest guardsman, threw flowers that fell at his feet, and cried, “Go on, brave Prince!” for they could not believe that he was one of the prisoners.

The crowd in the street being great, the march was stopped under a house taller than the rest; in the balcony one lady alone was seated, the others stood round her as if they were her handmaidens. This lady was most richly dressed, young, and very beautiful and stately, and was, indeed, the king’s daughter, Ariadne. She looked grave and full of pity, and, as Theseus happened to glance upwards, their eyes met, and remained fixed on each other. Theseus, who had never thought much about girls before, grew pale, for he had never seen so beautiful a maiden: Ariadne also turned pale, and then blushed and looked away, but her eyes glanced down again at Theseus, and he saw it, and a strange feeling came into his heart.

The guards cleared the crowd, and they all marched on till they came to the palace walls and gate, which were more beautiful even than the walls of the town. But the greatest wonder of all was the palace, standing in a wide park, and itself far greater than such towns as Theseus had seen, Troezene, or Aphidnae, or Athens. There was a multitude of roofs of various heights, endless roofs, endless windows, terraces, and gardens: no king’s palace of our times is nearly so great and strong. There were fountains and flowers and sweet-smelling trees in blossom, and, when the Athenians were led within the palace, they felt lost among the winding passages and halls.

The walls of them were painted with pictures of flying fishes, above a clear white sea, in which fish of many kinds were swimming, with the spray and bubbles flying from their tails, as the sea flows apart from the rudder of a ship. There were pictures of bull fights, men and girls teasing the bull, and throwing somersaults over him, and one bull had just tossed a girl high in the air. Ladies were painted in balconies, looking on, just such ladies as had watched Theseus and his company; and young men bearing tall cool vases full of wine were painted on other walls; and others were decorated with figures of bulls and stags, in hard plaster, fashioned marvellously, and standing out from the walls ‘in relief,’ as it is called. Other walls, again, were painted with patterns of leaves and flowers.

The rooms were full of the richest furniture, chairs inlaid with ivory, gold, and silver, chests inlaid with painted porcelain in little squares, each square containing a separate bright coloured picture. There were glorious

carpets, and in some passages stood rows of vases, each of them large enough to hold a man, like the pots in the story of Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves in the *Arabian Nights*. There were tablets of stone brought from Egypt, with images carved of gods and kings, and strange Egyptian writing, and there were cups of gold and silver – indeed, I could not tell you half the beautiful and wonderful things in the palace of Minos. We know that this is true, for the things themselves, all of them, or pictures of them, have been brought to light, dug out from under ground; and, after years of digging, there is still plenty of this wonderful palace to be explored.

The Athenians were dazzled, and felt lost and giddy with passing through so many rooms and passages, before they were led into the great hall named the Throne Room, where Minos was sitting in his gilded throne that is still standing. Around him stood his chiefs and princes, gloriously clothed in silken robes with jewels of gold; they left a lane between their ranks, and down this lane was led Theseus at the head of his little company. Minos, a dark-faced man, with touches of white in his hair and long beard, sat with his elbow on his knee, and his chin in his hand, and he fixed his eyes on the eyes of Theseus. Theseus bowed and then stood erect, with his eyes on the eyes of Minos.

"You are fifteen in number," said Minos at last, "my law claims fourteen."

"I came of my own will," answered Theseus, "and of their own will came my company. No lots were cast."

"Wherefore?" asked Minos.

"The people of Athens have a mind to be free, O king."

"There is a way," said Minos. "Slay the Minotaur and you are free from my tribute."

"I am minded to slay him," said Theseus, and, as he spoke, there was a stir in the throng of chiefs, and priests, and princes, and Ariadne glided through them, and stood a little behind her father's throne, at one side. Theseus bowed low, and again stood erect, with his eyes on the face of Ariadne.

"You speak like a king's son that has not known misfortune," said Minos.

"I have known misfortune, and my name is Theseus, Aegeus' son," said Theseus.

“This is a new thing. When I saw King Aegeus he had no son, but he had many nephews.”

“No son that he knew of,” said Theseus, “but now he has no nephews, and one son.”

“Is it so?” asked Minos, “Then you have avenged me on the slayers of my own son, fair sir, for it was your sword, was it not, that delivered Aegeus from the sons of Pallas?”

“My sword and the swords of my friends, of whom seven stand before you.”

“I will learn if this be true,” said Minos.

“True!” cried Theseus, and his hand flew to the place where his sword-hilt should have been, but he had no sword.

King Minos smiled. “You are young,” he said, “I will learn more of these matters. Lead these men and maidens to their own chambers in the palace,” he cried to his guard. “Let each have a separate chamber, and all things that are fitting for princes. Tomorrow I will take counsel.”

Theseus was gazing at Ariadne. She stood behind her father, and she put up her right hand as if to straighten her veil, but, as she raised her hand, she swiftly made the motion of lifting a cup to the lips; and then she laid on her lips the fingers of her left hand, closing them fast. Theseus saw the token, and he bowed, as did all his company, to Minos and to the princess, and they were led upstairs and along galleries, each to a chamber more rich and beautiful than they had seen before in their dreams. Then each was taken to a bath, they were washed and clothed in new garments, and brought back to their chambers, where meat was put before them, and wine in cups of gold. At the door of each chamber were stationed two guards, but four guards were set at the door of Theseus. At nightfall more food was brought, and, for Theseus, much red wine, in a great vessel adorned with ropes and knobs of gold.

Theseus ate well, but he drank none, and, when he had finished, he opened the door of his chamber, and carried out all the wine and the cup. “I am one,” he said, “who drinks water, and loves not the smell of wine in his chamber.”

The guards thanked him, and soon he heard them very merry over the king’s best wine, next he did not hear them at all, next – he heard them snoring!

Theseus opened the door gently and silently: the guards lay asleep across and beside the threshold. Something bright caught his eye, he looked up, a lamp was moving along the dark corridor, a lamp in the hand of a woman clad in a black robe; the light fell on her white silent feet, and on the feet of another woman who followed her.

Theseus softly slipped back into his chamber. The light, though shaded by the girl's hand, showed in the crevice between the door and the door-post. Softly entered Ariadne, followed by an old woman that had been her nurse. "You guessed the token?" she whispered. "In the wine was a sleepy drug."

Theseus, who was kneeling to her, nodded.

"I can show you the way to flee, and I bring you a sword."

"I thank you, lady, for the sword, and I pray you to show me the way – to the Minotaur."

Ariadne grew pale, and her hand flew to her heart.

"I pray you make haste. Flee I will not, nor, if the king have mercy on us, will I leave Crete till I have met the Minotaur: for he has shed the blood of my people."

Ariadne loved Theseus, and knew well in her heart that he loved her. But she was brave, and she made no more ado; she beckoned to him, and stepped across the sleeping guardsmen that lay beside the threshold. Theseus held up his hand, and she stopped, while he took two swords from the men of the guard. One was long, with a strong straight narrow blade tapering to a very sharp point; the other sword was short and straight, with keen cutting double edges. Theseus slung them round his neck by their belts, and Ariadne walked down the corridor, Theseus following her, and the old nurse following him. He had taken the swords from the sleeping men lest, if Ariadne gave him one, it might be found out that she had helped him, and she knew this in her heart, for neither of them spoke a word.

Swiftly and silently they went, through galleries and corridors that turned and wound about, till Ariadne came to the door of her own chamber. Here she held up her hand, and Theseus stopped, till she came forth again, thrusting something into the bosom of her gown. Again she led the way, down a broad staircase between great pillars, into a hall, whence she turned, and passed down a narrower stair, and then through many passages,

till she came into the open air, and they crossed rough ground to a cave in a hill. In the back of the cave was a door plated with bronze which she opened with a key. Here she stopped and took out of the bosom of her gown a coil of fine strong thread.

"Take this," she said, "and enter by that door, and first of all make fast the end of the coil to a stone, and so walk through the labyrinth, and, when you would come back, the coil shall be your guide. Take this key also, to open the door, and lock it from within. If you return place the key in a cleft in the wall within the outer door of the palace."

She stopped and looked at Theseus with melancholy eyes, and he threw his arms about her, and they kissed and embraced as lovers do who are parting and know not if they may ever meet again.

At last she sighed and said, "The dawn is near – farewell; the gods be with you. I give you the watchword of the night, that you may pass the sentinels if you come forth alive," and she told him the word. Then she opened the door and gave him the key, and the old nurse gave him the lamp which she carried, and some food to take with him.

# The Slaying of the Minotaur

**THESEUS FIRST FASTENED** one end of his coil of string to a pointed rock, and then began to look about him. The labyrinth was dark, and he slowly walked, holding the string, down the broadest path, from which others turned off to right or left. He counted his steps, and he had taken near three thousand steps when he saw the pale sky showing in a small circle cut in the rocky roof, above his head, and he saw the fading stars. Sheer walls of rock went up on either hand of him, a roof of rock was above him, but in the roof was this one open place, across which were heavy bars. Soon the daylight would come.

Theseus set the lamp down on a rock behind a corner, and he waited, thinking, at a place where a narrow dark path turned at right angles to the left. Looking carefully round he saw a heap of bones, not human bones, but skulls of oxen and sheep, hoofs of oxen, and shank bones. “This,” he thought, “must be the place where the food of the Minotaur is let down to him from above. They have not Athenian youths and maidens to give him every day! Beside his feeding place I will wait.”

Saying this to himself, he rose and went round the corner of the dark narrow path cut in the rock to the left. He made his own breakfast, from the food that Ariadne had given him, and it occurred to his mind that probably the Minotaur might also be thinking of breakfast time.

He sat still, and from afar away within he heard a faint sound, like the end of the echo of a roar, and he stood up, drew his long sword, and listened keenly. The sound came nearer and louder, a strange sound, not deep like the roar of a bull, but more shrill and thin. Theseus laughed silently. A monster with the head and tongue of a bull, but with the chest of a man, could roar no better than that! The sounds came nearer and louder, but still with the thin sharp tone in them. Theseus now took from his bosom the phial of gold that Medea had given him in Athens when she told him about the Minotaur. He removed the stopper, and held his thumb over the mouth of the phial, and grasped his long sword with his left hand, after fastening the clue of thread to his belt.

The roars of the hungry Minotaur came nearer and nearer; now his feet could be heard padding along the echoing floor of the labyrinth. Theseus moved to the shadowy corner of the narrow path, where it opened into the broad light passage, and he crouched there; his heart was beating quickly. On came the Minotaur, up leaped Theseus, and dashed the contents of the open phial in the eyes of the monster; a white dust flew out, and Theseus leaped back into his hiding place. The Minotaur uttered strange shrieks of pain; he rubbed his eyes with his monstrous hands; he raised his head up towards the sky, bellowing and confused; he stood tossing his head up and down; he turned round and round about, feeling with his hands for the wall. He was quite blind. Theseus drew his short sword, crept up, on naked feet, behind the monster, and cut through the back sinews of his legs at the knees. Down fell the Minotaur, with a crash and a roar, biting at the rocky floor with his lion's teeth, and waving his hands, and clutching at the empty air. Theseus waited for his chance, when the clutching hands rested, and then, thrice he drove the long sharp blade of bronze through the heart of the Minotaur. The body leaped, and lay still.

Theseus kneeled down, and thanked all the gods, and promised rich sacrifices, and a new temple to Pallas-Athene, the Guardian of Athens. When he had finished his prayer, he drew the short sword, and hacked off the head of the Minotaur. He sheathed both his swords, took the head in his hand, and followed the string back out of the daylit place, to the rock where he had left his lamp. With the lamp and the guidance of the string he easily found his way to the door, which he unlocked. He noticed that the thick bronze plates of the door were dinted and scarred by the points of the horns of the Minotaur, trying to force his way out.

He went out into the fresh early morning; all the birds were singing merrily, and merry was the heart of Theseus. He locked the door, and crossed to the palace, which he entered, putting the key in the place which Ariadne had shown him. She was there, with fear and joy in her eyes.

"Touch me not," said Theseus, "for I am foul with the blood of the Minotaur." She brought him to the baths on the ground floor, and swiftly fled up a secret stair. In the bathroom Theseus made himself clean, and clad himself in fresh raiment which was lying ready for him. When he was clean and clad he tied a rope of byblus round the horns of the head of the Minotaur, and went round the back of the palace, trailing the head behind

him, till he came to a sentinel. “I would see King Minos,” he said, “I have the password, *Androgeos*!”

The sentinel, pale and wondering, let him pass, and so he went through the guards, and reached the great door of the palace, and there the servants wrapped the bleeding head in cloth, that it might not stain the floors. Theseus bade them lead him to King Minos, who was seated on his throne, judging the four guardsmen, that had been found asleep.

When Theseus entered, followed by the serving men with their burden, the king never stirred on his throne, but turned his grey eyes on Theseus.

“My lord,” said Theseus, “that which was to be done is done.”

The servants laid their burden at the feet of King Minos, and removed the top fold of the covering. The king turned to the captain of his guard. “A week in the cells for each of these four men,” said he, and the four guards, who had expected to die by a cruel death, were led away. “Let that head and the body also be burned to ashes and thrown into the sea, far from the shore,” said Minos, and his servants silently covered the head of the Minotaur, and bore it from the throne room.

Then, at last, Minos rose from his throne, and took the hand of Theseus, and said, “Sir, I thank you, and I give you back your company safe and free; and I am no more in hatred with your people. Let there be peace between me and them. But will you not abide with us awhile, and be our guests?”

Theseus was glad enough, and he and his company tarried in the palace, and were kindly treated. Minos showed Theseus all the splendour and greatness of his kingdom and his ships, and great armouries, full of all manner of weapons: the names and numbers of them are yet known, for they are written on tablets of clay, that were found in the storehouse of the king. Later, in the twilight, Theseus and Ariadne would walk together in the fragrant gardens where the nightingales sang, and Minos knew it, and was glad. He thought that nowhere in the world could he find such a husband for his daughter, and he deemed it wise to have the alliance of so great a king as Theseus promised to be. But, loving his daughter, he kept Theseus with him long, till the prince was ashamed of his delay, knowing that his father, King Aegeus, and all the people of his country, were looking for him anxiously.

Therefore he told what was in his heart to Minos, who sighed, and said, “I knew what is in your heart, and I cannot say you nay. I give to you my daughter as gladly as a father may.”

Then they spoke of things of state, and made firm alliance between Cnossos and Athens while they both lived; and the wedding was done with great splendour, and, at last, Theseus and Ariadne and all their company went aboard, and sailed from Crete. One misfortune they had: the captain of their ship died of a sickness while they were in Crete, but Minos gave them the best of his captains. Yet by reason of storms and tempests they had a long and terrible voyage, driven out of their course into strange seas. When at length they found their bearings, a grievous sickness fell on beautiful Ariadne. Day by day she was weaker, till Theseus, with a breaking heart, stayed the ship at an isle but two days’ sail from Athens. There Ariadne was carried ashore, and laid in a bed in the house of the king of that island, and the physicians and the wise women did for her what they could. But she died with her hands in the hands of Theseus, and his lips on her lips. In that isle she was buried, and Theseus went on board his ship, and drew his cloak over his head, and so lay for two days, never moving nor speaking, and tasting neither meat nor drink. No man dared to speak to him, but when the vessel stopped in the harbour of Athens, he arose, and stared about him.

The shore was dark with people all dressed in mourning raiment, and the herald of the city came with the news that Aegeus the King was dead. For the Cretan captain did not know that he was to hoist the scarlet sail if Theseus came home in triumph, and Aegeus, as he watched the waters, had descried the dark sail from afar off, and, in his grief, had thrown himself down from the cliff, and was drowned. This was the end of the voyaging of Theseus.

Theseus wished to die, and be with Ariadne, in the land of Queen Persephone. But he was a strong man, and he lived to be the greatest of the Kings of Athens, for all the other towns came in, and were his subjects, and he ruled them well. His first care was to build a great fleet in secret harbours far from towns and the ways of men, for, though he and Minos were friends while they both lived, when Minos died the new Cretan king might oppress Athens.

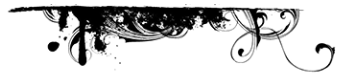
Minos died, at last, and his son picked a quarrel with Theseus, who refused to give up a man that had fled to Athens because the new king desired to slay him, and news came to Theseus that a great navy was being made ready in Crete to attack him. Then he sent heralds to the king of a fierce people, called the Dorians, who were moving through the countries to the north-west of Greece, seizing lands, settling on them, and marching forward again in a few years. They were wild, strong, and brave, and they are said to have had swords of iron, which were better than the bronze weapons of the Greeks.

The heralds of Theseus said to them, “Come to our king, and he will take you across the sea, and show you plunder enough. But you shall swear not to harm his kingdom.”

This pleased the Dorians well, and the ships of Theseus brought them round to Athens, where Theseus joined them with many of his own men, and they did the oath. They sailed swiftly to Crete, where, as they arrived in the dark, the Cretan captains thought that they were part of their own navy, coming in to join them in the attack on Athens; for that Theseus had a navy the Cretans knew not; he had built it so secretly. In the night he marched his men to Cnossos, and took the garrison by surprise, and burned the palace, and plundered it. Even now we can see that the palace has been partly burned, and hurriedly robbed by some sudden enemy.

The Dorians stayed in Crete, and were there in the time of Odysseus, holding part of the island, while the true Cretans held the greater part of it. But Theseus returned to Athens, and married Hippolyte, Queen of the Amazons. The story of their wedding festival is told in Shakespeare’s play, *A Midsummer Night’s Dream.* And Theseus had many new adventures, and many troubles, but he left Athens rich and strong, and in no more danger from the kings of Crete. Though the Dorians, after the time of Odysseus, swept all over the rest of Greece, and seized Mycenae and Lacedaemon, the towns of Agamemnon and Menelaus, they were true to their oath to Theseus, and left Athens to the Athenians.

# THE THEBAN CYCLE



## Introduction

**THE THEBAN CYCLE** references stories related to Thebes, of which there are four epics: The *Oedipodea* which relates the unfortunate story of Oedipus, the *Thebaid* which is the origin of 'The Seven Against Thebes' story, the *Epigoni* and the *Alcmeonis*. Sadly these epics are almost entirely lost to us now. These stories by different authors all serve in the same canon of Theban tales, following through several generations and are set before the events of the Trojan War, allowing Homer to reference them in his own epics. We have also included the story of Cadmus and the founding of the city here, which is not always traditionally considered one of the Cycle but is undoubtedly relevant as a pivotal story about Thebes.

# Cadmus

**THE FOLLOWING** is the legendary account of the founding of Thebes. After the abduction of his daughter Europa by Zeus, Agenor, king of Phoenicia, unable to reconcile himself to her loss, dispatched his son Cadmus in search of her, desiring him not to return without his sister.

For many years Cadmus pursued his search through various countries, but without success. Not daring to return home without her, he consulted the oracle of Apollo at Delphi; and the reply was that he must desist from his task, and take upon himself a new duty, i.e. that of founding a city, the site of which would be indicated to him by a heifer which had never borne the yoke, and which would lie down on the spot whereon the city was to be built.

Scarcely had Cadmus left the sacred fane, when he observed a heifer who bore no marks of servitude on her neck, walking slowly in front of him. He followed the animal for a considerable distance, until at length, on the site where Thebes afterwards stood, she looked towards heaven and, gently lowing, lay down in the long grass. Grateful for this mark of divine favour, Cadmus resolved to offer up the animal as a sacrifice, and accordingly sent his followers to fetch water for the libation from a neighbouring spring. This spring, which was sacred to Ares, was situated in a wood, and guarded by a fierce dragon, who, at the approach of the retainers of Cadmus, suddenly pounced upon them and killed them.

After waiting some time for the return of his servants Cadmus grew impatient, and hastily arming himself with his lance and spear, set out to seek them. On reaching the spot, the mangled remains of his unfortunate followers met his view, and near them he beheld the frightful monster, dripping with the blood of his victims. Seizing a huge rock, the hero hurled it with all his might upon the dragon; but protected by his tough black skin and steely scales as by a coat of mail, he remained unhurt. Cadmus now tried his lance, and with more success, for it pierced the side of the beast, who, furious with pain, sprang at his adversary, when

Cadmus, leaping aside, succeeded in fixing the point of his spear within his jaws, which final stroke put an end to the encounter.

While Cadmus stood surveying his vanquished foe Pallas-Athene appeared to him, and commanded him to sow the teeth of the dead dragon in the ground. He obeyed; and out of the furrows there arose a band of armed men, who at once commenced to fight with each other, until all except five were killed. These last surviving warriors made peace with each other, and it was with their assistance that Cadmus now built the famous city of Thebes. In later times the noblest Theban families proudly claimed their descent from these mighty earth-born warriors.

Ares was furious with rage when he discovered that Cadmus had slain his dragon, and would have killed him had not Zeus interfered, and induced him to mitigate his punishment to that of servitude for the term of eight years. At the end of that time the god of war became reconciled to Cadmus, and, in token of his forgiveness, bestowed upon him the hand of his daughter Harmonia in marriage. Their nuptials were almost as celebrated as those of Peleus and Thetis. All the gods honoured them with their presence, and offered rich gifts and congratulations. Cadmus himself presented his lovely bride with a splendid necklace fashioned by Hephaestus, which, however, after the death of Harmonia, always proved fatal to its possessor.

The children of Cadmus and Harmonia were one son, Polydorus, and four daughters, Autonoe, Ino, Semele, and Agave. For many years the founder of Thebes reigned happily, but at length a conspiracy was formed against him, and he was deprived of his throne by his grandson Pentheus. Accompanied by his faithful wife Harmonia, he retired into Illyria, and after death they were both changed by Zeus into serpents, and transferred to Elysium.

# Oedipus

**LAIUS AND JOCASTA**, King and Queen of Thebes, in Boeotia, were greatly delighted at the birth of a little son. In their joy they sent for the priests of Apollo, and bade them foretell the glorious deeds their heir would perform; but all their joy was turned to grief when told that the child was destined to kill his father, marry his mother, and bring great misfortunes upon his native city.

To prevent the fulfillment of this dreadful prophecy, Laius bade a servant carry the new-born child out of the city, and end its feeble little life. The king's mandate was obeyed only in part; for the servant, instead of killing the child, hung it up by its ankles to a tree in a remote place, and left it there to perish from hunger and exposure if it were spared by the wild beasts.

When he returned, none questioned how he had performed the appointed task, but all sighed with relief to think that the prophecy could never be accomplished. The child, however, was not dead, as all supposed. A shepherd in quest of a stray lamb had heard his cries, delivered him from his painful position, and carried him to Polybus, King of Corinth, who, lacking an heir of his own, gladly adopted the little stranger. The Queen of Corinth and her handmaidens hastened with tender concern to bathe the swollen ankles, and called the babe Oedipus (swollen-footed).

Years passed by. The young prince grew up in total ignorance of the unfortunate circumstances under which he had made his first appearance at court, until one day at a banquet one of his companions, heated by drink, began to quarrel with him, and taunted him about his origin, declaring that those whom he had been accustomed to call parents were in no way related to him.

These words, coupled with a few meaning glances hastily exchanged by the guests, excited Oedipus' suspicions, and made him question the queen, who, afraid lest he might do himself an injury in the first moment of his despair if the truth were revealed to him, had recourse to prevarication, and quieted him by the assurance that he was her beloved son.

Something in her manner, however, left a lingering doubt in Oedipus' mind, and made him resolve to consult the oracle of Delphi, whose words he knew would reveal the exact truth. He therefore went to this shrine; but, as usual, the oracle answered somewhat ambiguously, and merely warned him that fate had decreed he should kill his father, marry his mother, and cause great woes to his native city.

What! Kill Polybus, who had ever been such an indulgent father, and marry the queen, whom he revered as his mother! Never! Rather than perpetrate these awful crimes, and bring destruction upon the people of Corinth, whom he loved, he would wander away over the face of the earth, and never see city or parents again.

But his heart was filled with intense bitterness, and as he journeyed he did not cease to curse the fate which drove him away from home. After some time, he came to three crossroads; and while he stood there, deliberating which direction to take, a chariot, wherein an aged man was seated, came rapidly toward him.

The herald who preceded it haughtily called to the youth to stand aside and make way for his master; but Oedipus, who, as Polybus' heir, was accustomed to be treated with deference, resented the commanding tone, and refused to obey. Incensed at what seemed unparalleled impudence, the herald struck the youth, who, retaliating, stretched his assailant lifeless at his feet.

This affray attracted the attention of the master and other servants. They immediately attacked the murderer, who slew them all, thus unconsciously accomplishing the first part of the prophecy; for the aged man was Laius, his father, journeying incognito from Thebes to Delphi, where he wished to consult the oracle.

Oedipus then leisurely pursued his way until he came to the gates of Thebes, where he found the whole city in an uproar, "because the king had been found lifeless by the roadside, with all his attendants slain beside him, presumably the work of a band of highway robbers or assassins."

Of course, Oedipus did not connect the murder of such a great personage as the King of Thebes by an unknown band of robbers, with the death he had dealt to an arrogant old man, and he therefore composedly inquired what the second calamity alluded to might be.

With lowered voices, as if afraid of being overheard, the Thebans described the woman's head, bird's wings and claws, and lion's body, which were the outward presentment of a terrible monster called the Sphinx, which had taken up its station without the city gates beside the highway, and would allow none to pass in or out without propounding a difficult riddle. Then, if any hesitated to give the required answer, or failed to give it correctly, they were mercilessly devoured by the terrible Sphinx, which no one dared attack or could drive away.

While listening to these tidings, Oedipus saw a herald pass along the street, proclaiming that the throne and the queen's hand would be the reward of any man who dared encounter the Sphinx, and was fortunate enough to free the country of its terrible presence.

As Oedipus attached no special value to the life made desolate by the oracle's predictions, he resolved to slay the dreaded monster, and, with that purpose in view, advanced slowly, sword in hand, along the road where lurked the Sphinx. He soon found the monster, which from afar propounded the following enigma, warning him, at the same time, that he forfeited his life if he failed to give the right answer:

Oedipus was not devoid of intelligence, by any manner of means, and soon concluded that the animal could only be man, who in infancy, when too weak to stand, creeps along on hands and knees, in manhood walks erect, and in old age supports his tottering steps with a staff.

This reply, evidently as correct as unexpected, was received by the Sphinx with a hoarse cry of disappointment and rage as it turned to fly; but ere it could effect its purpose, it was stayed by Oedipus, who drove it at his sword's point over the edge of a neighboring precipice, where it was killed. On his return to the city, Oedipus was received with cries of joy, placed on a chariot, crowned King of Thebes, and married to his own mother, Jocasta, unwittingly fulfilling the second fearful clause of the prophecy.

A number of happy and moderately uneventful years now passed by, and Oedipus became the father of two manly sons, Eteocles and Polynices, and two beautiful daughters, Ismene and Antigone; but prosperity was not doomed to favour him long.

Just when he fancied himself most happy, and looked forward to a peaceful old age, a terrible scourge visited Thebes, causing the death of

many faithful subjects, and filling the hearts of all with great terror. The people now turned to him, beseeching him to aid them, as he had done once before when threatened by the Sphinx; and Oedipus sent messengers to consult the Delphic oracle, who declared the plague would cease only when the former king's murderers had been found and punished.

Messengers were sent in every direction to collect all possible information about the murder committed so long ago, and after a short time they brought unmistakable proofs which convicted Oedipus of the crime. At the same time the guilty servant confessed that he had not killed the child, but had exposed it on a mountain, whence it was carried to Corinth's king.

The chain of evidence was complete, and now Oedipus discovered that he had involuntarily been guilty of the three crimes to avoid which he had fled from Corinth. The rumor of these dreadful discoveries soon reached Jocasta, who, in her despair at finding herself an accomplice, committed suicide.

Oedipus, apprised of her intention, rushed into her apartment too late to prevent its being carried out, and found her lifeless. This sight was more than the poor monarch could bear, and in his despair he blinded himself with one of her ornaments.

Penniless, blind, and on foot, he then left the scene of his awful crimes, accompanied by his daughter Antigone, the only one who loved him still, and who was ready to guide his uncertain footsteps wherever he wished to go. After many days of weary wandering, father and daughter reached Colonus, where grew a mighty forest sacred to the avenging deities, the Furies, or Eumenides.

Here Oedipus expressed his desire to remain, and, after bidding his faithful daughter an affectionate farewell, he groped his way into the dark forest alone. The wind rose, the lightning flashed, the thunder pealed; but although, as soon as the storm was over, a search was made for Oedipus, no trace of him was ever found, and the ancients fancied that the Furies had dragged him down to Hades to receive the punishment of all his crimes.

Antigone, no longer needed by her unhappy father, slowly wended her way back to Thebes, where she found that the plague had ceased, but that her brothers had quarreled about the succession to the throne. A

compromise was finally decided upon, whereby it was decreed that Eteocles, the elder son, should reign one year, and at the end of that period resign the throne to Polynices for an equal space of time, both brothers thus exercising the royal authority in turn. This arrangement seemed satisfactory to Eteocles; but when, at the end of the first year, Polynices returned from his travels in foreign lands to claim the sceptre, Eteocles refused to relinquish it, and, making use of his power, drove the claimant away.

# The Seven Against Thebes

**POLYNICES' NATURE** was not one to endure such a slight patiently. He now repaired to Argos, where he arrived in the dead of night. Outside the gates of the royal palace he encountered Tydeus, the son of Oeneus, king of Calydon. Having accidentally killed a relative in the chase, Tydeus was also a fugitive; but being mistaken by Polynices in the darkness for an enemy, a quarrel ensued, which might have ended fatally, had not king Adrastus, aroused by the clamour, appeared on the scene and parted the combatants.

By the light of the torches borne by his attendants Adrastus observed, to his surprise, that on the shield of Polynices a lion was depicted, and on that of Tydeus a boar. The former bore this insignia in honour of the renowned hero Heracles, the latter in memory of the famous Calydonian boar-hunt. This circumstance reminded the king of an extraordinary oracular prediction concerning his two beautiful daughters, Argia and Deipyle, which was to the effect that he would give them in marriage to a lion and a boar. Hailing with delight what he regarded as an auspicious solution of the mysterious prophecy, he invited the strangers into his palace; and when he heard their history, and had convinced himself that they were of noble birth, he bestowed upon Polynices his beautiful daughter Argia, and upon Tydeus the fair Deipyle, promising at the same time that he would assist both his sons-in-law to regain their rightful patrimony.

The first care of Adrastus was to aid Polynices in regaining possession of his lawful share in the government of Thebes. He accordingly invited the most powerful chiefs in his kingdom to join in the expedition, all of whom readily obeyed the call with the exception of the king's brother-in-law, Amphiaraus, the seer. As he foresaw a disastrous termination to the enterprise, and knew that not one of the heroes, save Adrastus himself, would return alive, he earnestly dissuaded the king from carrying out his project, and declined to take any part in the undertaking. But Adrastus, seconded by Polynices and Tydeus, was obstinately bent on the

achievement of his purpose, and Amphiaraus, in order to escape from their importunities, concealed himself in a hiding-place known only to his wife Eriphyle.

Now on the occasion of the marriage of Amphiaraus it had been agreed, that if he ever differed in opinion with the king, his wife should decide the question. As the presence of Amphiaraus was indispensable to the success of the undertaking, and, moreover, as Adrastus would not enter upon it without ‘the eye of the army,’ as he called his brother-in-law, Polynices, bent on securing his services, determined to bribe Eriphyle to use her influence with her husband and to decide the question in accordance with his wishes. He bethought himself of the beautiful necklace of Harmonia, wife of Cadmus, which he had brought with him in his flight from Thebes. Without loss of time he presented himself before the wife of Amphiaraus, and held up to her admiring gaze the glittering bauble, promising that if she revealed the hiding-place of her husband and induced him to join the expedition, the necklace should be hers. Eriphyle, unable to withstand the tempting bait, accepted the bribe, and thus Amphiaraus was compelled to join the army. But before leaving his home he extorted a solemn promise from his son Alcmaeon that, should he perish on the field of battle, he would avenge his death on his mother, the perfidious Eriphyle.

Seven leaders were now chosen, each at the head of a separate detachment of troops. These were Adrastus the king, his two brothers Hippomedon and Parthenopaeus, Capaneus his nephew, Polynices and Tydeus, and Amphiaraus.

When the army was collected they set out for Nemea, which was at this time governed by king Lycurgus. Here the Argives, being short of water, halted on the outskirts of a forest in order to search for a spring, when they saw a majestic and beautiful woman seated on the trunk of a tree, nursing an infant. They concluded from her noble and queenly appearance that she must be a goddess, but were informed by her that she was Hypsipile, queen of the Lemnians, who had been carried away captive by pirates, and sold as a slave to king Lycurgus, and that she was now acting as nurse to his infant son. When the warriors told her that they were in search of water, she laid the child down in the grass, and led them to a secret spring in the forest, with which she alone was acquainted. But on their return they found, to their grief, that the unfortunate babe had been killed during their

absence, by a serpent. They slew the reptile, and then collecting the remains of the infant, they buried them with funereal honours and proceeded on their way.

The warlike host now appeared before the walls of Thebes, and each leader placed himself before one of the seven gates of the city in readiness for the attack. Eteocles, in conjunction with Creon, had made due preparations to repel the invaders, and had stationed troops, under the command of trusty leaders, to guard each of the gates. Then, according to the practice of the ancients of consulting soothsayers before entering upon any undertaking, the blind old seer Tiresias was sent for, who, after carefully taking the auguries from the flight of birds, declared that all efforts to defend the city would prove unavailing, unless the youngest descendant of the house of Cadmus would offer himself as a voluntary sacrifice for the good of the state.

When Creon heard the words of the seer his first thought was of his favourite son Menoeceus, the youngest scion of the royal house, who was present at the interview. He therefore earnestly implored him to leave the city, and to repair for safety to Delphi. But the gallant youth heroically resolved to sacrifice his life for the benefit of his country, and after taking leave of his old father, mounted the city walls, and plunging a dagger into his heart, perished in the sight of the contending hosts.

Adrastus now gave his troops the word of command to storm the city, and they rushed forward to the attack with great valour. The battle raged long and furiously, and after heavy losses on both sides the Argives were routed and put to flight.

After the lapse of some days they reorganized their forces, and again appeared before the gates of Thebes, when Eteocles, grieved to think that there should be such a terrible loss of life on his account, sent a herald into the opposite camp, with a proposition that the fate of the campaign should be decided by single combat between himself and his brother Polynices. The challenge was readily accepted, and in the duel which took place outside the city walls, in the sight of the rival forces, Eteocles and Polynices were both fatally wounded and expired on the field of battle.

Both sides now claimed the day, and the result was that hostilities recommenced, and soon the battle raged with greater fury than ever. But victory at last declared itself for the Thebans. In their flight the Argives

lost all their leaders, Adrastus excepted, who owed his safety to the fleetness of his horse Arion.

By the death of the brothers, Creon became once more king of Thebes, and in order to show his abhorrence of the conduct of Polynices in fighting against his country, he strictly forbade any one to bury either his remains or those of his allies. But the faithful Antigone, who had returned to Thebes on the death of her father, could not endure that the body of her brother should remain unburied. She therefore bravely disregarded the orders of the king, and endeavoured to give sepulture to the remains of Polynices.

When Creon discovered that his commands had been set at defiance, he inhumanly condemned the devoted maiden to be entombed alive in a subterranean vault.

But retribution was at hand. His son, Haemon, who was betrothed to Antigone, having contrived to effect an entrance into the vault, was horrified to find that Antigone had hanged herself by her veil. Feeling that life without her would be intolerable, he threw himself in despair on his own sword, and after solemnly invoking the malediction of the gods on the head of his father, expired beside the dead body of his betrothed.

Hardly had the news of the tragic fate of his son reached the king, before another messenger appeared, bearing the tidings that his wife Eurydice, on hearing of the death of Haemon, had put an end to her existence, and thus the king found himself in his old age both widowed and childless.

Nor did he succeed in the execution of his vindictive designs; for Adrastus, who, after his flight from Thebes, had taken refuge at Athens, induced Theseus to lead an army against the Thebans, to compel them to restore the dead bodies of the Argive warriors to their friends, in order that they might perform due funereal rites in honour of the slain. This undertaking was successfully accomplished, and the remains of the fallen heroes were interred with due honours.

# The Epigoni

**TEN YEARS** after these events the sons of the slain heroes, who were called Epigoni, or descendants, resolved to avenge the death of their fathers, and with this object entered upon a new expedition against the city of Thebes.

By the advice of the Delphic oracle the command was intrusted to Alcmaeon, the son of Amphiaraus; but remembering the injunction of his father he hesitated to accept this post before executing vengeance on his mother Eriphyle. Thersander, however, the son of Polynices, adopting similar tactics to those of his father, bribed Eriphyle with the beautiful veil of Harmonia, bequeathed to him by Polynices, to induce her son Alcmaeon and his brother Amphilochus to join in this second war against Thebes.

Now the mother of Alcmaeon was gifted with that rare fascination which renders its possessor irresistible to all who may chance to come within its influence; nor was her own son able to withstand her blandishments. Yielding therefore to her wily representations he accepted the command of the troops, and at the head of a large and powerful army advanced upon Thebes.

Before the gates of the city Alcmaeon encountered the Thebans under the command of Laodamas, the son of Eteocles. A fierce battle ensued, in which the Theban leader, after performing prodigies of valour, perished by the hand of Alcmaeon.

After losing their chief and the flower of their army, the Thebans retreated behind the city walls, and the enemy now pressed them hard on every side. In their distress they appealed to the blind old seer Tiresias, who was over a hundred years old. With trembling lips and in broken accents, he informed them that they could only save their lives by abandoning their native city with their wives and families. Upon this they despatched ambassadors into the enemy’s camp; and whilst these were protracting negotiations during the night, the Thebans, with their wives and children, evacuated the city. Next morning the Argives entered Thebes and plundered it, placing Thersander, the son of Polynices (who was a

descendant of Cadmus), on the throne which his father had so vainly contested.

# Alcamaeon and the Necklace

**WHEN ALCMAEON** returned from his expedition against the Thebans he determined to fulfil the last injunction of his father Amphiaraus, who had desired him to be revenged on his mother Eriphyle for her perfidy in accepting a bribe to betray him. This resolution was further strengthened by the discovery that his unprincipled mother had urged him also to join the expedition in return for the much-coveted veil of Harmonia. He therefore put her to death; and taking with him the ill-fated necklace and veil, abandoned for ever the home of his fathers.

But the gods, who could not suffer so unnatural a crime to go unpunished, afflicted him with madness, and sent one of the Furies to pursue him unceasingly. In this unhappy condition he wandered about from place to place, until at last having reached Psophis in Arcadia, Phegeus, king of the country, not only purified him of his crime, but also bestowed upon him the hand of his daughter Arsinoe, to whom Alcmaeon presented the necklace and veil, which had already been the cause of so much unhappiness.

Though now released from his mental affliction, the curse which hung over him was not entirely removed, and on his account the country of his adoption was visited with a severe drought. On consulting the oracle of Delphi he was informed that any land which offered him shelter would be cursed by the gods, and that the malediction would continue to follow him till he came to a country which was not in existence at the time he had murdered his mother. Bereft of hope, and resolved no longer to cast the shadow of his dark fate over those he loved, Alcmaeon took a tender leave of his wife and little son, and became once more an outcast and wanderer.

Arrived after a long and painful pilgrimage at the river Achelous, he discovered, to his unspeakable joy, a beautiful and fertile island, which had but lately emerged from beneath the water. Here he took up his abode; and in this haven of rest he was at length freed from his sufferings, and finally purified of his crime by the river-god Achelous. But in his new-found home where prosperity smiled upon him, Alcmaeon soon forgot the loving

wife and child he had left behind, and wooed Calirrhoe, the beautiful daughter of the river-god, who became united to him in marriage.

For many years Alcmaeon and Calirrhoe lived happily together, and two sons were born to them. But unfortunately for the peace of her husband, the daughter of Achelous had heard of the celebrated necklace and veil of Harmonia, and became seized with a violent desire to become the possessor of these precious treasures.

Now the necklace and veil were in the safe-keeping of Arsinoe; but as Alcmaeon had carefully concealed the fact of his former marriage from his young wife, he informed her, when no longer able to combat her importunities, that he had concealed them in a cave in his native country, and promised to hasten thither and procure them for her. He accordingly took leave of Calirrhoe and his children, and proceeded to Psophis, where he presented himself before his deserted wife and her father, king Phegeus. To them he excused his absence by the fact of his having suffered from a fresh attack of madness, and added that an oracle had foretold to him that his malady would only be cured when he had deposited the necklace and veil of Harmonia in the temple of Apollo at Delphi. Arsinoe, deceived by his artful representations, unhesitatingly restored to him his bridal gifts, whereupon Alcmaeon set out on his homeward journey, well satisfied with the successful issue of his expedition.

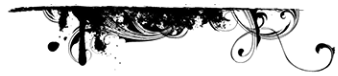
But the fatal necklace and veil were doomed to bring ruin and disaster to all who possessed them. During his sojourn at the court of king Phegeus, one of the servants who had accompanied Alcmaeon betrayed the secret of his union with the daughter of the river-god; and when the king informed his sons of his treacherous conduct, they determined to avenge the wrongs of their sister Arsinoe. They accordingly concealed themselves at a point of the road which Alcmaeon was compelled to pass, and as he neared the spot they suddenly emerged from their place of ambush, fell upon him and despatched him.

When Arsinoe, who still loved her faithless husband, heard of the murder, she bitterly reproached her brothers for the crime which they had perpetrated, at which they were so incensed, that they placed her in a chest, and conveyed her to Agapenor, son of Ancaeus, at Tegea. Here they accused her of the murder of which they themselves were guilty, and she suffered a painful death.

Calirrhoe, on learning the sad fate of Alcmaeon, implored Zeus that her infant sons might grow at once to manhood, and avenge the death of their father. The ruler of Olympus heard the petition of the bereaved wife, and, in answer to her prayer, the children of yesterday became transformed into bearded men, full of strength and courage, and thirsting for revenge.

Hastening to Tegea, they there encountered the sons of Phegeus, who were about to repair to Delphi, in order to deposit the necklace and veil in the sanctuary of Apollo; and before the brothers had time to defend themselves, the stalwart sons of Calirrhoe rushed upon them and slew them. They then proceeded to Psophis, where they killed king Phegeus and his wife, after which they returned to their mother with the necklace and veil, which, by the command of her father Achelous, were deposited as sacred offerings in the temple of Apollo at Delphi.

# TALES OF TROY



## Introduction

**THE CITY OF TROY** grew on the low hill on the plain near the entrance to the Hellespont, founded by Ilus, a descendant of Zeus, who marked out the boundaries of a city and settled there. Ilus prayed to the gods for good luck and discovered the following morning a large wooden statue, the Palladium, the image that the goddess Athene had made in memory of her friend Pallas. Apollo appeared and begged Ilus to keep sacred the image, to guard and respect it against all invaders. As long as Troy preserved the token of godly esteem, the city would be safe. But men being men, and even then subject to the fates and powers of the gods, events would occur to threaten the sanctity of the beautiful city of Troy. And that city would become the food of legends for aeons to come, the site of a battle which involved the greatest heroes of Greece, the most powerful gods of Olympia, and the most beautiful women in the land. The tales of Troy are the longest and most exciting of all the legends, and they begin with a beautiful woman, and a handsome man, cast from his noble birth.

# The Judgement of Paris

**THE GOOD NAME** of Troy had been blackened over the years by many of the gods, who had been wronged by her leaders. These gods held a grudge that was relaxed only under the shrewd and swift-footed King Priam, who took over the reins of Troy and allowed her once more to blossom. Now Priam was a superstitious and careful monarch, never erring in order that his command of the lovely land might be released. And when his wise wife Hecuba dreamed that she had borne a firebrand their youngest son was cast away, left to die on the heights of Mount Ida.

This child was Paris, but he did not die. He was suckled by a bear and brought to live with the herdsmen of the mountain, where he grew strong and handsome, proud and respected by his peers. He grew up ignorant of his noble breeding, content to wed and live with an exquisite mountain nymph Oenone in a humble home. He was called Alexander there, the ‘helper of men’.

And then one day, as he tended his flocks on the sunlit mountains, surrounded by greenery, and more than content with his simple lot, he was visited by Hermes, messenger of the gods. There had been an altercation he said, looking with awe at the beauty of this mortal, and three of the loveliest goddesses required a judge to ascertain which was the fairest. It had been decreed by Zeus that Paris was a man of great wisdom and fair looks, and that this lowly shepherd should be given the task of judging amongst the goddesses.

“Fear not, Paris,” said Hermes, “Zeus bids thee judge freely which of the three seems fairest in thine eyes; and the father of gods and men will be thy shield in giving true judgement.”

Paris nodded in amazement, the sanctity of his simple life at once eclipsed by the excitement and shallowness of the deed before him.

The first goddess to appear to him was Hera, Queen of Olympus. She explained to the young shepherd that a wedding had taken place between Peleus and Thetis, to which Eris alone among the immortals had not been included through some oversight. She had appeared nonetheless at the

feast, and churning trouble, she threw an apple at the feet of three of the greatest of the goddesses, those who thought themselves the most beautiful in the land – Hera, Athene and Aphrodite. The apple was inscribed with the words: For the Fairest.

And it was to judge that fairest that Paris had been summoned, to put an end to the petty quarrelling. Hera went on to offer him all her queenly gifts, including money and the richest land on earth.

Athene offered him wisdom and success in battle, “Adjudge the prize to me,” she whispered, “and thou shall be famed as the wisest and bravest among men.”

The third goddess was Aphrodite, as beautiful certainly as her sisters, but with cunning that matched her looks. “I am Aphrodite,” she said softly, coyly drawing herself up to the shepherd. “I can offer thee gifts that are sweeter than any on earth. He who wins my favour needs only love to be loved again. Choose me, and I promise thee the most beautiful daughter of men to be thy wife.”

And although Paris was wed already, he chose Aphrodite without a moment’s hesitation, and he gave the golden apple to the goddess of love who thanked him with such a radiant smile that his cheeks were rouged with pleasure.

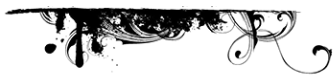
It was with this glow of gratification that Paris set off the next day to take part in the games arranged each year by King Priam to commemorate the death of his youngest son, Paris. It was his first visit to the city since his birth, and he was anxious to test his strength. He excelled at the games, his strength, his passion and his ambition surpassing even that of his own brothers, the young princes of Troy. And when they, greatly angered by his prowess, took offence, and plotted to have an errant arrow sent in his direction, his sister Cassandra, who had a gift of divination, shouted out, not knowing what she said, “Do not raise your hand against your brother.”

The princes were aghast, King Priam delighted, and it was with open arms that Paris was reunited with his family and welcomed back to Troy. He was given a great duty to perform for the King, to travel to Greece in order to secure the return of Hesione who had been borne off by Heracles many years before. Cassandra alone was vehemently against this venture, her prophetic vision showing her death and destruction that would lead to a great war against Troy. But her words were ignored, and Paris set off on

his voyage, stopping during its course to visit Menelaus, king of Sparta, who was married to Helen, the most beautiful woman in the world.

It was this diversion which led Helen far from her marriage vows, into the arms of another man in an elopement which would excite the world of Greece and begin a battle that would run for ten long, blood-thirsty years.

# The Wooing of Helen of the Fair Hands



**NOW AT THAT TIME** one lady was far the fairest in the world: namely, Helen, daughter of King Tyndarus. Every young prince heard of her and desired to marry her; so her father invited them all to his palace, and entertained them, and found out what they would give. Among the rest Odysseus went, but his father had a little kingdom, a rough island, with others near it, and Odysseus had not a good chance. He was not tall; though very strong and active, he was a short man with broad shoulders, but his face was handsome, and, like all the princes, he wore long yellow hair, clustering like a hyacinth flower. His manner was rather hesitating, and he seemed to speak very slowly at first, though afterwards his words came freely. He was good at everything a man can do; he could plough, and build houses, and make ships, and he was the best archer in Greece, except one, and could bend the great bow of a dead king, Eurytus, which no other man could string. But he had no horses, and had no great train of followers; and, in short, neither Helen nor her father thought of choosing Odysseus for her husband out of so many tall, handsome young princes, glittering with gold ornaments. Still, Helen was very kind to Odysseus, and there was great friendship between them, which was fortunate for her in the end.

Tyndarus first made all the princes take an oath that they would stand by the prince whom he chose, and would fight for him in all his quarrels. Then he named for her husband Menelaus, King of Lacedaemon. He was a very brave man, but not one of the strongest; he was not such a fighter as the gigantic Ajax, the tallest and strongest of men; or as Diomede, the friend of Odysseus; or as his own brother, Agamemnon, the King of the rich city of Mycenae, who was chief over all other princes, and general of the whole army in war. The great lions carved in stone that seemed to guard his city are still standing above the gate through which Agamemnon used to drive his chariot.

The man who proved to be the best fighter of all, Achilles, was not among the lovers of Helen, for he was still a boy, and his mother, Thetis of

the silver feet, a goddess of the sea, had sent him to be brought up as a girl, among the daughters of Lycomedes of Scyros, in an island far away. Thetis did this because Achilles was her only child, and there was a prophecy that, if he went to the wars, he would win the greatest glory, but die very young, and never see his mother again. She thought that if war broke out he would not be found hiding in girl's dress, among girls, far away.

So at last, after thinking over the matter for long, Tyndarus gave fair Helen to Menelaus, the rich King of Lacedaemon; and her twin sister Clytaemnestra, who was also very beautiful, was given to King Agamemnon, the chief over all the princes. They all lived very happily together at first, but not for long.

In the meantime King Tyndarus spoke to his brother Icarius, who had a daughter named Penelope. She also was very pretty, but not nearly so beautiful as her cousin, fair Helen, and we know that Penelope was not very fond of her cousin. Icarius, admiring the strength and wisdom of Odysseus, gave him his daughter Penelope to be his wife, and Odysseus loved her very dearly, no man and wife were ever dearer to each other. They went away together to rocky Ithaca, and perhaps Penelope was not sorry that a wide sea lay between her home and that of Helen; for Helen was not only the fairest woman that ever lived in the world, but she was so kind and gracious and charming that no man could see her without loving her. When she was only a child, the famous prince Theseus, whose story is to be told later, carried her away to his own city of Athens, meaning to marry her when she grew up, and, even at that time, there was a war for her sake, for her brothers followed Theseus with an army, and fought him, and brought her home.

She had fairy gifts: for instance, she had a great red jewel, called 'the Star,' and when she wore it red drops seemed to fall from it and vanished before they touched and stained her white breast – so white that people called her 'the Daughter of the Swan.' She could speak in the very voice of any man or woman, so folk also named her Echo, and it was believed that she could neither grow old nor die, but would at last pass away to the Elysian plain and the world's end, where life is easiest for men. No snow comes thither, nor great storm, nor any rain; but always the river of Ocean that rings round the whole earth sends forth the west wind to blow cool on

the people of King Rhadamanthus of the fair hair. These were some of the stories that men told of fair Helen, but Odysseus was never sorry that he had not the fortune to marry her, so fond he was of her cousin, his wife, Penelope, who was very wise and good.

When Odysseus brought his wife home they lived, as the custom was, in the palace of his father, King Laertes, but Odysseus, with his own hands, built a chamber for Penelope and himself. There grew a great olive tree in the inner court of the palace, and its stem was as large as one of the tall carved pillars of the hall. Round about this tree Odysseus built the chamber, and finished it with close-set stones, and roofed it over, and made close-fastening doors. Then he cut off all the branches of the olive tree, and smoothed the trunk, and shaped it into the bed-post, and made the bedstead beautiful with inlaid work of gold and silver and ivory. There was no such bed in Greece, and no man could move it from its place, and this bed comes again into the story, at the very end.

Now time went by, and Odysseus and Penelope had one son called Telemachus; and Eurycleia, who had been his father’s nurse, took care of him. They were all very happy, and lived in peace in rocky Ithaca, and Odysseus looked after his lands, and flocks, and herds, and went hunting with his dog Argos, the swiftest of hounds.

# The Stealing of Helen

**THIS HAPPY TIME** did not last long, and Telemachus was still a baby, when war arose, so great and mighty and marvellous as had never been known in the world. Far across the sea that lies on the east of Greece, there dwelt the rich King Priam. His town was called Troy, or Ilios, and it stood on a hill near the seashore, where are the straits of Hellespont, between Europe and Asia; it was a great city surrounded by strong walls, and its ruins are still standing. The kings could make merchants who passed through the straits pay toll to them, and they had allies in Thrace, a part of Europe opposite Troy, and Priam was chief of all princes on his side of the sea, as Agamemnon was chief king in Greece. Priam had many beautiful things; he had a vine made of gold, with golden leaves and clusters, and he had the swiftest horses, and many strong and brave sons; the strongest and bravest was named Hector, and the youngest and most beautiful was named Paris.

There was a prophecy that Priam's wife would give birth to a burning torch, so, when Paris was born, Priam sent a servant to carry the baby into a wild wood on Mount Ida, and leave him to die or be eaten by wolves and wild cats. The servant left the child, but a shepherd found him, and brought him up as his own son. The boy became as beautiful, for a boy, as Helen was for a girl, and was the best runner, and hunter, and archer among the country people. He was loved by the beautiful Oenone, a nymph – that is, a kind of fairy – who dwelt in a cave among the woods of Ida. The Greeks and Trojans believed in these days that such fair nymphs haunted all beautiful woodland places, and the mountains, and wells, and had crystal palaces, like mermaids, beneath the waves of the sea. These fairies were not mischievous, but gentle and kind. Sometimes they married mortal men, and Oenone was the bride of Paris, and hoped to keep him for her own all the days of his life.

It was believed that she had the magical power of healing wounded men, however sorely they were hurt. Paris and Oenone lived most happily together in the forest; but one day, when the servants of Priam had driven

off a beautiful bull that was in the herd of Paris, he left the hills to seek it, and came into the town of Troy. His mother, Hecuba, saw him, and looking at him closely, perceived that he wore a ring which she had tied round her baby's neck when he was taken away from her soon after his birth. Then Hecuba, beholding him so beautiful, and knowing him to be her son, wept for joy, and they all forgot the prophecy that he would be a burning torch of fire, and Priam gave him a house like those of his brothers, the Trojan princes.

The fame of beautiful Helen reached Troy, and Paris quite forgot unhappy Oenone, and must needs go to see Helen for himself. Perhaps he meant to try to win her for his wife, before her marriage. But sailing was little understood in these times, and the water was wide, and men were often driven for years out of their course, to Egypt, and Africa, and far away into the unknown seas, where fairies lived in enchanted islands, and cannibals dwelt in caves of the hills.

Paris came much too late to have a chance of marrying Helen; however, he was determined to see her, and he made his way to her palace beneath the mountain Taygetus, beside the clear swift river Eurotas. The servants came out of the hall when they heard the sound of wheels and horses' feet, and some of them took the horses to the stables, and tilted the chariots against the gateway, while others led Paris into the hall, which shone like the sun with gold and silver. Then Paris and his companions were led to the baths, where they were bathed, and clad in new clothes, mantles of white, and robes of purple, and next they were brought before King Menelaus, and he welcomed them kindly, and meat was set before them, and wine in cups of gold. While they were talking, Helen came forth from her fragrant chamber, like a Goddess, her maidens following her, and carrying for her an ivory distaff with violet-coloured wool, which she span as she sat, and heard Paris tell how far he had travelled to see her who was so famous for her beauty even in countries far away.

Then Paris knew that he had never seen, and never could see, a lady so lovely and gracious as Helen as she sat and span, while the red drops fell and vanished from the ruby called the Star; and Helen knew that among all the princes in the world there was none so beautiful as Paris. Now some say that Paris, by art magic, put on the appearance of Menelaus, and asked Helen to come sailing with him, and that she, thinking he was her husband,

followed him, and he carried her across the wide waters of Troy, away from her lord and her one beautiful little daughter, the child Hermione. And others say that the Gods carried Helen herself off to Egypt, and that they made in her likeness a beautiful ghost, out of flowers and sunset clouds, whom Paris bore to Troy, and this they did to cause war between Greeks and Trojans. Another story is that Helen and her bower maiden and her jewels were seized by force, when Menelaus was out hunting. It is only certain that Paris and Helen did cross the seas together, and that Menelaus and little Hermione were left alone in the melancholy palace beside the Eurotas. Penelope, we know for certain, made no excuses for her beautiful cousin, but hated her as the cause of her own sorrows and of the deaths of thousands of men in war, for all the Greek princes were bound by their oath to fight for Menelaus against any one who injured him and stole his wife away. But Helen was very unhappy in Troy, and blamed herself as bitterly as all the other women blamed her, and most of all Oenone, who had been the love of Paris. The men were much more kind to Helen, and were determined to fight to the death rather than lose the sight of her beauty among them.

The news of the dishonour done to Menelaus and to all the princes of Greece ran through the country like fire through a forest. East and west and south and north went the news: to kings in their castles on the hills, and beside the rivers and on cliffs above the sea. The cry came to ancient Nestor of the white beard at Pylos, Nestor who had reigned over two generations of men, who had fought against the wild folk of the hills, and remembered the strong Heracles, and Eurytus of the black bow that sang before the day of battle.

The cry came to black-bearded Agamemnon, in his strong town called ‘golden Mycenae,’ because it was so rich; it came to the people in Thisbe, where the wild doves haunt; and it came to rocky Pytho, where is the sacred temple of Apollo and the maid who prophesies. It came to Ajax, the tallest and strongest of men, in his little isle of Salamis; and to Diomede of the loud war-cry, the bravest of warriors, who held Argos and Tiryns of the black walls of huge stones, that are still standing. The summons came to the western islands and to Odysseus in Ithaca, and even far south to the great island of Crete of the hundred cities, where Idomeneus ruled in Cnossos; Idomeneus, whose ruined palace may still be seen with the

throne of the king, and pictures painted on the walls, and the King's own draught-board of gold and silver, and hundreds of tablets of clay, on which are written the lists of royal treasures. Far north went the news to Pelasgian Argos, and Hellas, where the people of Peleus dwelt, the Myrmidons; but Peleus was too old to fight, and his boy, Achilles, dwelt far away, in the island of Scyros, dressed as a girl, among the daughters of King Lycomedes. To many another town and to a hundred islands went the bitter news of approaching war, for all princes knew that their honour and their oaths compelled them to gather their spearmen, and bowmen, and slingers from the fields and the fishing, and to make ready their ships, and meet King Agamemnon in the harbour of Aulis, and cross the wide sea to besiege Troy town.

Now the story is told that Odysseus was very unwilling to leave his island and his wife Penelope, and little Telemachus; while Penelope had no wish that he should pass into danger, and into the sight of Helen of the fair hands. So it is said that when two of the princes came to summon Odysseus, he pretended to be mad, and went ploughing the sea sand with oxen, and sowing the sand with salt. Then the prince Palamedes took the baby Telemachus from the arms of his nurse, Eurycleia, and laid him in the line of the furrow, where the ploughshare would strike him and kill him. But Odysseus turned the plough aside, and they cried that he was not mad, but sane, and he must keep his oath, and join the fleet at Aulis, a long voyage for him to sail, round the stormy southern Cape of Maleia.

Whether this tale be true or not, Odysseus did go, leading twelve black ships, with high beaks painted red at prow and stern. The ships had oars, and the warriors manned the oars, to row when there was no wind. There was a small raised deck at each end of the ships; on these decks men stood to fight with sword and spear when there was a battle at sea. Each ship had but one mast, with a broad lugger sail, and for anchors they had only heavy stones attached to cables. They generally landed at night, and slept on the shore of one of the many islands, when they could, for they greatly feared to sail out of sight of land.

The fleet consisted of more than a thousand ships, each with fifty warriors, so the army was of more than fifty thousand men. Agamemnon had a hundred ships, Diomede had eighty, Nestor had ninety, the Cretans with Idomeneus, had eighty, Menelaus had sixty; but Ajax and Odysseus,

who lived in small islands, had only twelve ships apiece. Yet Ajax was so brave and strong, and Odysseus so brave and wise, that they were ranked among the greatest chiefs and advisers of Agamemnon, with Menelaus, Diomede, Idomeneus, Nestor, Menestheus of Athens, and two or three others. These chiefs were called the Council, and gave advice to Agamemnon, who was commander-in-chief. He was a brave fighter, but so anxious and fearful of losing the lives of his soldiers that Odysseus and Diomede were often obliged to speak to him very severely. Agamemnon was also very insolent and greedy, though, when anybody stood up to him, he was ready to apologise, for fear the injured chief should renounce his service and take away his soldiers.

Nestor was much respected because he remained brave, though he was too old to be very useful in battle. He generally tried to make peace when the princes quarrelled with Agamemnon. He loved to tell long stories about his great deeds when he was young, and he wished the chiefs to fight in old-fashioned ways.

For instance, in his time the Greeks had fought in clan regiments, and the princely men had never dismounted in battle, but had fought in squadrons of chariots, but now the owners of chariots fought on foot, each man for himself, while his squire kept the chariot near him to escape on if he had to retreat. Nestor wished to go back to the good old way of chariot charges against the crowds of foot soldiers of the enemy. In short, he was a fine example of the old-fashioned soldier.

Ajax, though so very tall, strong, and brave, was rather stupid. He seldom spoke, but he was always ready to fight, and the last to retreat. Menelaus was weak of body, but as brave as the best, or more brave, for he had a keen sense of honour, and would attempt what he had not the strength to do. Diomede and Odysseus were great friends, and always fought side by side, when they could, and helped each other in the most dangerous adventures.

These were the chiefs who led the great Greek armada from the harbour of Aulis. A long time had passed, after the flight of Helen, before the large fleet could be collected, and more time went by in the attempt to cross the sea to Troy. There were tempests that scattered the ships, so they were driven back to Aulis to refit; and they fought, as they went out again, with the peoples of unfriendly islands, and besieged their towns. What they

wanted most of all was to have Achilles with them, for he was the leader of fifty ships and 2,500 men, and he had magical armour made, men said, for his father, by Hephaestus, the God of armour-making and smithy work.

At last the fleet came to the Isle of Scyros, where they suspected that Achilles was concealed. King Lycomedes received the chiefs kindly, and they saw all his beautiful daughters dancing and playing at ball, but Achilles was still so young and slim and so beautiful that they did not know him among the others. There was a prophecy that they could not take Troy without him, and yet they could not find him out. Then Odysseus had a plan. He blackened his eyebrows and beard and put on the dress of a Phoenician merchant. The Phoenicians were a people who lived near the Jews, and were of the same race, and spoke much the same language, but, unlike the Jews, who, at that time were farmers in Palestine, tilling the ground, and keeping flocks and herds, the Phoenicians were the greatest of traders and sailors, and stealers of slaves. They carried cargoes of beautiful cloths, and embroideries, and jewels of gold, and necklaces of amber, and sold these everywhere about the shores of Greece and the islands.

Odysseus then dressed himself like a Phoenician pedlar, with his pack on his back: he only took a stick in his hand, his long hair was turned up, and hidden under a red sailor's cap, and in this figure he came, stooping beneath his pack, into the courtyard of King Lycomedes. The girls heard that a pedlar had come, and out they all ran, Achilles with the rest, to watch the pedlar undo his pack. Each chose what she liked best: one took a wreath of gold; another a necklace of gold and amber; another earrings; a fourth a set of brooches, another a dress of embroidered scarlet cloth; another a veil; another a pair of bracelets; but at the bottom of the pack lay a great sword of bronze, the hilt studded with golden nails. Achilles seized the sword. "This is for me!" he said, and drew the sword from the gilded sheath, and made it whistle round his head.

"You are Achilles, Peleus' son!" said Odysseus; "and you are to be the chief warrior of the Achaeans," for the Greeks then called themselves Achaeans. Achilles was only too glad to hear these words, for he was quite tired of living among maidens. Odysseus led him into the hall where the chiefs were sitting at their wine, and Achilles was blushing like any girl.

“Here is the Queen of the Amazons,” said Odysseus – for the Amazons were a race of warlike maidens – “or rather here is Achilles, Peleus’ son, with sword in hand.” Then they all took his hand, and welcomed him, and he was clothed in man’s dress, with the sword by his side, and presently they sent him back with ten ships to his home.

There his mother, Thetis, of the silver feet, the goddess of the sea, wept over him, saying, “My child, thou hast the choice of a long and happy and peaceful life here with me, or of a brief time of war and undying renown. Never shall I see thee again in Argos if thy choice is for war.”

But Achilles chose to die young, and to be famous as long as the world stands. So his father gave him fifty ships, with Patroclus, who was older than he, to be his friend, and with an old man, Phoenix, to advise him; and his mother gave him the glorious armour that the God had made for his father, and the heavy ashen spear that none but he could wield, and he sailed to join the host of the Achaeans, who all praised and thanked Odysseus that had found for them such a prince. For Achilles was the fiercest fighter of them all, and the swiftest-footed man, and the most courteous prince, and the gentlest with women and children, but he was proud and high of heart, and when he was angered his anger was terrible.

The Trojans would have had no chance against the Greeks if only the men of the city of Troy had fought to keep Helen of the fair hands. But they had allies, who spoke different languages, and came to fight for them both from Europe and from Asia. On the Trojan as well as on the Greek side were people called Pelasgians, who seem to have lived on both shores of the sea. There were Thracians, too, who dwelt much further north than Achilles, in Europe and beside the strait of Hellespont, where the narrow sea runs like a river. There were warriors of Lycia, led by Sarpedon and Glaucus; there were Carians, who spoke in a strange tongue; there were Mysians and men from Alybe, which was called ‘the birthplace of silver,’ and many other peoples sent their armies, so that the war was between Eastern Europe, on one side, and Western Asia Minor on the other. The people of Egypt took no part in the war: the Greeks and Islesmen used to come down in their ships and attack the Egyptians as the Danes used to invade England. You may see the warriors from the islands, with their horned helmets, in old Egyptian pictures.

The commander-in-chief, as we say now, of the Trojans was Hector, the son of Priam. He was thought a match for any one of the Greeks, and was brave and good. His brothers also were leaders, but Paris preferred to fight from a distance with bow and arrows. He and Pandarus, who dwelt on the slopes of Mount Ida, were the best archers in the Trojan army. The princes usually fought with heavy spears, which they threw at each other, and with swords, leaving archery to the common soldiers who had no armour of bronze. But Teucer, Meriones, and Odysseus were the best archers of the Achaeans. People called Dardanians were led by Aeneas, who was said to be the son of the most beautiful of the goddesses. These, with Sarpedon and Glaucus, were the most famous of the men who fought for Troy.

Troy was a strong town on a hill: Mount Ida lay behind it, and in front was a plain sloping to the sea shore. Through this plain ran two beautiful clear rivers, and there were scattered here and there what you would have taken for steep knolls, but they were really mounds piled up over the ashes of warriors who had died long ago. On these mounds sentinels used to stand and look across the water to give warning if the Greek fleet drew near, for the Trojans had heard that it was on its way. At last the fleet came in view, and the sea was black with ships, the oarsmen pulling with all their might for the honour of being the first to land. The race was won by the ship of the prince Protesilaus, who was first of all to leap on shore, but as he leaped he was struck to the heart by an arrow from the bow of Paris. This must have seemed a good omen to the Trojans, and to the Greeks evil, but we do not hear that the landing was resisted in great force, any more than that of Norman William was, when he invaded England.

The Greeks drew up all their ships on shore, and the men camped in huts built in front of the ships. There was thus a long row of huts with the ships behind them, and in these huts the Greeks lived all through the ten years that the siege of Troy lasted. In these days they do not seem to have understood how to conduct a siege. You would have expected the Greeks to build towers and dig trenches all round Troy, and from the towers watch the roads, so that provisions might not be brought in from the country. This is called ‘investing’ a town, but the Greeks never invested Troy. Perhaps they had not men enough; at all events the place remained open, and cattle could always be driven in to feed the warriors and the women and children.

Moreover, the Greeks for long never seem to have tried to break down one of the gates, nor to scale the walls, which were very high, with ladders. On the other hand, the Trojans and allies never ventured to drive the Greeks into the sea; they commonly remained within the walls or skirmished just beneath them. The older men insisted on this way of fighting, in spite of Hector, who always wished to attack and storm the camp of the Greeks. Neither side had machines for throwing heavy stones, such as the Romans used later, and the most that the Greeks did was to follow Achilles and capture small neighbouring cities, and take the women for slaves, and drive the cattle. They got provisions and wine from the Phoenicians, who came in ships, and made much profit out of the war.

It was not till the tenth year that the war began in real earnest, and scarcely any of the chief leaders had fallen. Fever came upon the Greeks, and all day the camp was black with smoke, and all night shone with fire from the great piles of burning wood, on which the Greeks burned their dead, whose bones they then buried under hillocks of earth. Many of these hillocks are still standing on the plain of Troy. When the plague had raged for ten days, Achilles called an assembly of the whole army, to try to find out why the Gods were angry. They thought that the beautiful God Apollo (who took the Trojan side) was shooting invisible arrows at them from his silver bow, though fevers in armies are usually caused by dirt and drinking bad water. The great heat of the sun, too, may have helped to cause the disease; but we must tell the story as the Greeks told it themselves. So Achilles spoke in the assembly, and proposed to ask some prophet why Apollo was angry. The chief prophet was Calchas. He rose and said that he would declare the truth if Achilles would promise to protect him from the anger of any prince whom the truth might offend.

Achilles knew well whom Calchas meant. Ten days before, a priest of Apollo had come to the camp and offered ransom for his daughter Chryseis, a beautiful girl, whom Achilles had taken prisoner, with many others, when he captured a small town. Chryseis had been given as a slave to Agamemnon, who always got the best of the plunder because he was chief king, whether he had taken part in the fighting or not. As a rule he did not. To Achilles had been given another girl, Briseis, of whom he was very fond. Now when Achilles had promised to protect Calchas, the prophet spoke out, and boldly said, what all men knew already, that Apollo

caused the plague because Agamemnon would not return Chryseis, and had insulted her father, the priest of the God.

On hearing this, Agamemnon was very angry. He said that he would send Chryseis home, but that he would take Briseis away from Achilles. Then Achilles was drawing his great sword from the sheath to kill Agamemnon, but even in his anger he knew that this was wrong, so he merely called Agamemnon a greedy coward, ‘with face of dog and heart of deer,’ and he swore that he and his men would fight no more against the Trojans. Old Nestor tried to make peace, and swords were not drawn, but Briseis was taken away from Achilles, and Odysseus put Chryseis on board of his ship and sailed away with her to her father’s town, and gave her up to her father. Then her father prayed to Apollo that the plague might cease, and it did cease – when the Greeks had cleansed their camp, and purified themselves and cast their filth into the sea.

We know how fierce and brave Achilles was, and we may wonder that he did not challenge Agamemnon to fight a duel. But the Greeks never fought duels, and Agamemnon was believed to be chief king by right divine. Achilles went alone to the sea shore when his dear Briseis was led away, and he wept, and called to his mother, the silver-footed lady of the waters. Then she arose from the grey sea, like a mist, and sat down beside her son, and stroked his hair with her hand, and he told her all his sorrows. So she said that she would go up to the dwelling of the Gods, and pray Zeus, the chief of them all, to make the Trojans win a great battle, so that Agamemnon should feel his need of Achilles, and make amends for his insolence, and do him honour.

Thetis kept her promise, and Zeus gave his word that the Trojans should defeat the Greeks. That night Zeus sent a deceitful dream to Agamemnon. The dream took the shape of old Nestor, and said that Zeus would give him victory that day. While he was still asleep, Agamemnon was full of hope that he would instantly take Troy, but, when he woke, he seems not to have been nearly so confident, for in place of putting on his armour, and bidding the Greeks arm themselves, he merely dressed in his robe and mantle, took his sceptre, and went and told the chiefs about his dream. They did not feel much encouraged, so he said that he would try the temper of the army. He would call them together, and propose to return to Greece; but, if the soldiers took him at his word, the other chiefs were to stop them. This was

a foolish plan, for the soldiers were wearying for beautiful Greece, and their homes, and wives and children. Therefore, when Agamemnon did as he had said, the whole army rose, like the sea under the west wind, and, with a shout, they rushed to the ships, while the dust blew in clouds from under their feet. Then they began to launch their ships, and it seems that the princes were carried away in the rush, and were as eager as the rest to go home.

But Odysseus only stood in sorrow and anger beside his ship, and never put hand to it, for he felt how disgraceful it was to run away. At last he threw down his mantle, which his herald Eurybates of Ithaca, a round-shouldered, brown, curly-haired man, picked up, and he ran to find Agamemnon, and took his sceptre, a gold-studded staff, like a marshal's baton, and he gently told the chiefs whom he met that they were doing a shameful thing; but he drove the common soldiers back to the place of meeting with the sceptre. They all returned, puzzled and chattering, but one lame, bandy-legged, bald, round-shouldered, impudent fellow, named Thersites, jumped up and made an insolent speech, insulting the princes, and advising the army to run away. Then Odysseus took him and beat him till the blood came, and he sat down, wiping away his tears, and looking so foolish that the whole army laughed at him, and cheered Odysseus when he and Nestor bade them arm and fight. Agamemnon still believed a good deal in his dream, and prayed that he might take Troy that very day, and kill Hector. Thus Odysseus alone saved the army from a cowardly retreat; but for him the ships would have been launched in an hour. But the Greeks armed and advanced in full force, all except Achilles and his friend Patroclus with their two or three thousand men. The Trojans also took heart, knowing that Achilles would not fight, and the armies approached each other. Paris himself, with two spears and a bow, and without armour, walked into the space between the hosts, and challenged any Greek prince to single combat. Menelaus, whose wife Paris had carried away, was as glad as a hungry lion when he finds a stag or a goat, and leaped in armour from his chariot, but Paris turned and slunk away, like a man when he meets a great serpent on a narrow path in the hills. Then Hector rebuked Paris for his cowardice, and Paris was ashamed and offered to end the war by fighting Menelaus. If he himself fell, the Trojans must give up Helen and all her jewels; if Menelaus fell, the Greeks were to return without fair

Helen. The Greeks accepted this plan, and both sides disarmed themselves to look on at the fight in comfort, and they meant to take the most solemn oaths to keep peace till the combat was lost and won, and the quarrel settled. Hector sent into Troy for two lambs, which were to be sacrificed when the oaths were taken.

In the meantime Helen of the fair hands was at home working at a great purple tapestry on which she embroidered the battles of the Greeks and Trojans. It was just like the tapestry at Bayeux on which Norman ladies embroidered the battles in the Norman Conquest of England. Helen was very fond of embroidering, like poor Mary, Queen of Scots, when a prisoner in Loch Leven Castle. Probably the work kept both Helen and Mary from thinking of their past lives and their sorrows.

When Helen heard that her husband was to fight Paris, she wept, and threw a shining veil over her head, and with her two bower maidens went to the roof of the gate tower, where king Priam was sitting with the old Trojan chiefs. They saw her and said that it was small blame to fight for so beautiful a lady, and Priam called her “dear child,” and said, “I do not blame you, I blame the Gods who brought about this war.” But Helen said that she wished she had died before she left her little daughter and her husband, and her home: “Alas! Shameless me!” Then she told Priam the names of the chief Greek warriors, and of Odysseus, who was shorter by a head than Agamemnon but broader in chest and shoulders. She wondered that she could not see her own two brothers, Castor and Polydeuces, and thought that they kept aloof in shame for her sin; but the green grass covered their graves, for they had both died in battle, far away in Lacedaemon, their own country.

Then the lambs were sacrificed, and the oaths were taken, and Paris put on his brother’s armour: helmet, breastplate, shield, and leg-armour. Lots were drawn to decide whether Paris or Menelaus should throw his spear first, and, as Paris won, he threw his spear, but the point was blunted against the shield of Menelaus. But when Menelaus threw his spear it went clean through the shield of Paris, and through the side of his breastplate, but only grazed his robe. Menelaus drew his sword, and rushed in, and smote at the crest of the helmet of Paris, but his bronze blade broke into four pieces. Menelaus caught Paris by the horsehair crest of his helmet, and dragged him towards the Greeks, but the chin-strap broke, and

Menelaus turning round threw the helmet into the ranks of the Greeks. But when Menelaus looked again for Paris, with a spear in his hand, he could see him nowhere! The Greeks believed that the beautiful goddess Aphrodite, whom the Romans called Venus, hid him in a thick cloud of darkness and carried him to his own house, where Helen of the fair hands found him and said to him, “Would that thou hadst perished, conquered by that great warrior who was my lord! Go forth again and challenge him to fight thee face to face.” But Paris had no more desire to fight, and the Goddess threatened Helen, and compelled her to remain with him in Troy, coward as he had proved himself. Yet on other days Paris fought well; it seems that he was afraid of Menelaus because, in his heart, he was ashamed of himself.

Meanwhile Menelaus was seeking for Paris everywhere, and the Trojans, who hated him, would have shown his hiding place. But they knew not where he was, and the Greeks claimed the victory, and thought that, as Paris had the worst of the fight, Helen would be restored to them, and they would all sail home.

# Trojan Victories

**THE WAR MIGHT NOW** have ended, but an evil and foolish thought came to Pandarus, a prince of Ida, who fought for the Trojans. He chose to shoot an arrow at Menelaus, contrary to the sworn vows of peace, and the arrow pierced the breastplate of Menelaus through the place where the clasped plates meet, and drew his blood. Then Agamemnon, who loved his brother dearly, began to lament, saying that, if he died, the army would all go home and Trojans would dance on the grave of Menelaus.

"Do not alarm all our army," said Menelaus, "the arrow has done me little harm"; and so it proved, for the surgeon easily drew the arrow out of the wound.

Then Agamemnon hastened here and there, bidding the Greeks arm and attack the Trojans, who would certainly be defeated, for they had broken the oaths of peace. But with his usual insolence he chose to accuse Odysseus and Diomede of cowardice, though Diomede was as brave as any man, and Odysseus had just prevented the whole army from launching their ships and going home. Odysseus answered him with spirit, but Diomede said nothing at the moment; later he spoke his mind. He leaped from his chariot, and all the chiefs leaped down and advanced in line, the chariots following them, while the spearmen and bowmen followed the chariots. The Trojan army advanced, all shouting in their different languages, but the Greeks came on silently. Then the two front lines clashed, shield against shield, and the noise was like the roaring of many flooded torrents among the hills. When a man fell he who had slain him tried to strip off his armour, and his friends fought over his body to save the dead from this dishonour.

Odysseus fought above a wounded friend, and drove his spear through head and helmet of a Trojan prince, and everywhere men were falling beneath spears and arrows and heavy stones which the warriors threw. Here Menelaus speared the man who built the ships with which Paris had sailed to Greece; and the dust rose like a cloud, and a mist went up from the fighting men, while Diomede stormed across the plain like a river in

flood, leaving dead bodies behind him as the river leaves boughs of trees and grass to mark its course. Pandarus wounded Diomede with an arrow, but Diomede slew him, and the Trojans were being driven in flight, when Sarpedon and Hector turned and hurled themselves on the Greeks; and even Diomede shuddered when Hector came on, and charged at Odysseus, who was slaying Trojans as he went, and the battle swayed this way and that, and the arrows fell like rain.

But Hector was sent into the city to bid the women pray to the goddess Athene for help, and he went to the house of Paris, whom Helen was imploring to go and fight like a man, saying: “Would that the winds had wafted me away, and the tides drowned me, shameless that I am, before these things came to pass!”

Then Hector went to see his dear wife, Andromache, whose father had been slain by Achilles early in the siege, and he found her and her nurse carrying her little boy, Hector’s son, and like a star upon her bosom lay his beautiful and shining golden head. Now, while Helen urged Paris to go into the fight, Andromache prayed Hector to stay with her in the town, and fight no more lest he should be slain and leave her a widow, and the boy an orphan, with none to protect him.

“The army,” she said, “should come back within the walls, where they had so long been safe, not fight in the open plain.”

But Hector answered that he would never shrink from battle, “yet I know this in my heart, the day shall come for holy Troy to be laid low, and Priam and the people of Priam. But this and my own death do not trouble me so much as the thought of you, when you shall be carried as a slave to Greece, to spin at another woman’s bidding, and bear water from a Grecian well. May the heaped up earth of my tomb cover me ere I hear thy cries and the tale of thy captivity.”

Then Hector stretched out his hands to his little boy, but the child was afraid when he saw the great glittering helmet of his father and the nodding horsehair crest. So Hector laid his helmet on the ground and dandled the child in his arms, and tried to comfort his wife, and said good-bye for the last time, for he never came back to Troy alive. He went on his way back to the battle, and Paris went with him, in glorious armour, and soon they were slaying the princes of the Greeks.

The battle raged till nightfall, and in the night the Greeks and Trojans burned their dead; and the Greeks made a trench and wall round their camp, which they needed for safety now that the Trojans came from their town and fought in the open plain.

Next day the Trojans were so successful that they did not retreat behind their walls at night, but lit great fires on the plain: a thousand fires, with fifty men taking supper round each of them, and drinking their wine to the music of flutes. But the Greeks were much discouraged, and Agamemnon called the whole army together, and proposed that they should launch their ships in the night and sail away home.

Then Diomede stood up, and said: “You called me a coward lately. You are the coward! Sail away if you are afraid to remain here, but all the rest of us will fight till we take Troy town.”

Then all shouted in praise of Diomede, and Nestor advised them to send five hundred young men, under his own son, Thrasymedes, to watch the Trojans, and guard the new wall and the ditch, in case the Trojans attacked them in the darkness. Next Nestor counselled Agamemnon to send Odysseus and Ajax to Achilles, and promise to give back Briseis, and rich presents of gold, and beg pardon for his insolence. If Achilles would be friends again with Agamemnon, and fight as he used to fight, the Trojans would soon be driven back into the town.

Agamemnon was very ready to beg pardon, for he feared that the whole army would be defeated, and cut off from their ships, and killed or kept as slaves. So Odysseus and Ajax and the old tutor of Achilles, Phoenix, went to Achilles and argued with him, praying him to accept the rich presents, and help the Greeks. But Achilles answered that he did not believe a word that Agamemnon said; Agamemnon had always hated him, and always would hate him. No; he would not cease to be angry, he would sail away next day with all his men, and he advised the rest to come with him.

“Why be so fierce?” said tall Ajax, who seldom spoke. “Why make so much trouble about one girl? We offer you seven girls, and plenty of other gifts.”

Then Achilles said that he would not sail away next day, but he would not fight till the Trojans tried to burn his own ships, and there he thought that Hector would find work enough to do. This was the most that Achilles would promise, and all the Greeks were silent when Odysseus delivered

his message. But Diomede arose and said that, with or without Achilles, fight they must; and all men, heavy at heart, went to sleep in their huts or in the open air at their doors.

Agamemnon was much too anxious to sleep. He saw the glow of the thousand fires of the Trojans in the dark, and heard their merry flutes, and he groaned and pulled out his long hair by handfuls. When he was tired of crying and groaning and tearing his hair, he thought that he would go for advice to old Nestor. He threw a lion skin, the coverlet of his bed, over his shoulder, took his spear, went out and met Menelaus – for he, too, could not sleep – and Menelaus proposed to send a spy among the Trojans, if any man were brave enough to go, for the Trojan camp was all alight with fires, and the adventure was dangerous. Therefore the two wakened Nestor and the other chiefs, who came just as they were, wrapped in the fur coverlets of their beds, without any armour. First they visited the five hundred young men set to watch the wall, and then they crossed the ditch and sat down outside and considered what might be done. ‘Will nobody go as a spy among the Trojans?’ said Nestor; he meant would none of the young men go. Diomede said that he would take the risk if any other man would share it with him, and, if he might choose a companion, he would take Odysseus.

“Come, then, let us be going,” said Odysseus, “for the night is late, and the dawn is near.”

As these two chiefs had no armour on, they borrowed shields and leather caps from the young men of the guard, for leather would not shine as bronze helmets shine in the firelight. The cap lent to Odysseus was strengthened outside with rows of boars’ tusks. Many of these tusks, shaped for this purpose, have been found, with swords and armour, in a tomb in Mycenae, the town of Agamemnon. This cap which was lent to Odysseus had once been stolen by his grandfather, Autolycus, who was a Master Thief, and he gave it as a present to a friend, and so, through several hands, it had come to young Meriones of Crete, one of the five hundred guards, who now lent it to Odysseus. So the two princes set forth in the dark, so dark it was that though they heard a heron cry, they could not see it as it flew away.

While Odysseus and Diomede stole through the night silently, like two wolves among the bodies of dead men, the Trojan leaders met and

considered what they ought to do. They did not know whether the Greeks had set sentinels and outposts, as usual, to give warning if the enemy were approaching; or whether they were too weary to keep a good watch; or whether perhaps they were getting ready their ships to sail homewards in the dawn. So Hector offered a reward to any man who would creep through the night and spy on the Greeks; he said he would give the spy the two best horses in the Greek camp.

Now among the Trojans there was a young man named Dolon, the son of a rich father, and he was the only boy in a family of five sisters. He was ugly, but a very swift runner, and he cared for horses more than for anything else in the world. Dolon arose and said, “If you will swear to give me the horses and chariot of Achilles, son of Peleus, I will steal to the hut of Agamemnon and listen and find out whether the Greeks mean to fight or flee.”

Hector swore to give these horses, which were the best in the world, to Dolon, so he took his bow and threw a grey wolf’s hide over his shoulders, and ran towards the ships of the Greeks.

Now Odysseus saw Dolon as he came, and said to Diomede, “Let us suffer him to pass us, and then do you keep driving him with your spear towards the ships, and away from Troy.”

So Odysseus and Diomede lay down among the dead men who had fallen in the battle, and Dolon ran on past them towards the Greeks. Then they rose and chased him as two greyhounds course a hare, and, when Dolon was near the sentinels, Diomede cried “Stand, or I will slay you with my spear!” and he threw his spear just over Dolon’s shoulder. So Dolon stood still, green with fear, and with his teeth chattering. When the two came up, he cried, and said that his father was a rich man, who would pay much gold, and bronze, and iron for his ransom.

Odysseus said, “Take heart, and put death out of your mind, and tell us what you are doing here.”

Dolon said that Hector had promised him the horses of Achilles if he would go and spy on the Greeks.

“You set your hopes high,” said Odysseus, “for the horses of Achilles are not earthly steeds, but divine; a gift of the Gods, and Achilles alone can drive them. But, tell me, do the Trojans keep good watch, and where is

Hector with his horses?" for Odysseus thought that it would be a great adventure to drive away the horses of Hector.

"Hector is with the chiefs, holding council at the tomb of Ilus," said Dolon; "but no regular guard is set. The people of Troy, indeed, are round their watch fires, for they have to think of the safety of their wives and children; but the allies from far lands keep no watch, for their wives and children are safe at home." Then he told where all the different peoples who fought for Priam had their stations; but, said he, "if you want to steal horses, the best are those of Rhesus, King of the Thracians, who has only joined us tonight. He and his men are asleep at the furthest end of the line, and his horses are the best and greatest that ever I saw: tall, white as snow, and swift as the wind, and his chariot is adorned with gold and silver, and golden is his armour. Now take me prisoner to the ships, or bind me and leave me here while you go and try whether I have told you truth or lies."

"No," said Diomede, "if I spare your life you may come spying again," and he drew his sword and smote off the head of Dolon. They hid his cap and bow and spear where they could find them easily, and marked the spot, and went through the night to the dark camp of King Rhesus, who had no watch-fire and no guards. Then Diomede silently stabbed each sleeping man to the heart, and Odysseus seized the dead by the feet and threw them aside lest they should frighten the horses, which had never been in battle, and would shy if they were led over the bodies of dead men. Last of all Diomede killed King Rhesus, and Odysseus led forth his horses, beating them with his bow, for he had forgotten to take the whip from the chariot. Then Odysseus and Diomede leaped on the backs of the horses, as they had not time to bring away the chariot, and they galloped to the ships, stopping to pick up the spear, and bow, and cap of Dolon. They rode to the princes, who welcomed them, and all laughed for glee when they saw the white horses and heard that King Rhesus was dead, for they guessed that all his army would now go home to Thrace. This they must have done, for we never hear of them in the battles that followed, so Odysseus and Diomede deprived the Trojans of thousands of men. The other princes went to bed in good spirits, but Odysseus and Diomede took a swim in the sea, and then went into hot baths, and so to breakfast, for rosy-fingered Dawn was coming up the sky.

# Battle at the Ships

**WITH DAWN** Agamemnon awoke, and fear had gone out of his heart. He put on his armour, and arrayed the chiefs on foot in front of their chariots, and behind them came the spearmen, with the bowmen and slingers on the wings of the army. Then a great black cloud spread over the sky, and red was the rain that fell from it. The Trojans gathered on a height in the plain, and Hector, shining in armour, went here and there, in front and rear, like a star that now gleams forth and now is hidden in a cloud.

The armies rushed on each other and hewed each other down, as reapers cut their way through a field of tall corn. Neither side gave ground, though the helmets of the bravest Trojans might be seen deep in the ranks of the Greeks; and the swords of the bravest Greeks rose and fell in the ranks of the Trojans, and all the while the arrows showered like rain. But at noon-day, when the weary woodman rests from cutting trees, and takes his dinner in the quiet hills, the Greeks of the first line made a charge, Agamemnon running in front of them, and he speared two Trojans, and took their breastplates, which he laid in his chariot, and then he speared one brother of Hector and struck another down with his sword, and killed two more who vainly asked to be made prisoners of war. Footmen slew footmen, and chariot men slew chariot men, and they broke into the Trojan line as fire falls on a forest in a windy day, leaping and roaring and racing through the trees. Many an empty chariot did the horses hurry madly through the field, for the charioteers were lying dead, with the greedy vultures hovering above them, flapping their wide wings. Still Agamemnon followed and slew the hindmost Trojans, but the rest fled till they came to the gates, and the oak tree that grew outside the gates, and there they stopped.

But Hector held his hands from fighting, for in the meantime he was making his men face the enemy and form up in line and take breath, and was encouraging them, for they had retreated from the wall of the Greeks across the whole plain, past the hill that was the tomb of Ilus, a king of old, and past the place of the wild fig-tree. Much ado had Hector to rally

the Trojans, but he knew that when men do turn again they are hard to beat. So it proved, for when the Trojans had rallied and formed in line, Agamemnon slew a Thracian chief who had come to fight for Troy before King Rhesus came. But the eldest brother of the slain man smote Agamemnon through the arm with his spear, and, though Agamemnon slew him in turn, his wound bled much and he was in great pain, so he leaped into his chariot and was driven back to the ships.

Then Hector gave the word to charge, as a huntsman cries on his hounds against a lion, and he rushed forward at the head of the Trojan line, slaying as he went. Nine chiefs of the Greeks he slew, and fell upon the spearmen and scattered them, as the spray of the waves is scattered by the wandering wind.

Now the ranks of the Greeks were broken, and they would have been driven among their ships and killed without mercy, had not Odysseus and Diomede stood firm in the centre, and slain four Trojan leaders. The Greeks began to come back and face their enemies in line of battle again, though Hector, who had been fighting on the Trojan right, rushed against them. But Diomede took good aim with his spear at the helmet of Hector, and struck it fairly. The spear-point did not go through the helmet, but Hector was stunned and fell; and, when he came to himself, he leaped into his chariot, and his squire drove him against the Pylians and Cretans, under Nestor and Idomeneus, who were on the left wing of the Greek army. Then Diomede fought on till Paris, who stood beside the pillar on the hillock that was the tomb of old King Ilus, sent an arrow clean through his foot. Odysseus went and stood in front of Diomede, who sat down, and Odysseus drew the arrow from his foot, and Diomede stepped into his chariot and was driven back to the ships.

Odysseus was now the only Greek chief that still fought in the centre. The Greeks all fled, and he was alone in the crowd of Trojans, who rushed on him as hounds and hunters press round a wild boar that stands at bay in a wood.

“They are cowards that flee from the fight,” said Odysseus to himself; “but I will stand here, one man against a multitude.” He covered the front of his body with his great shield, that hung by a belt round his neck, and he smote four Trojans and wounded a fifth. But the brother of the wounded man drove a spear through the shield and breastplate of Odysseus, and tore

clean through his side. Then Odysseus turned on this Trojan, and he fled, and Odysseus sent a spear through his shoulder and out at his breast, and he died. Odysseus dragged from his own side the spear that had wounded him, and called thrice with a great voice to the other Greeks, and Menelaus and Ajax rushed to rescue him, for many Trojans were round him, like jackals round a wounded stag that a man has struck with an arrow. But Ajax ran and covered the wounded Odysseus with his huge shield till he could climb into the chariot of Menelaus, who drove him back to the ships.

Meanwhile, Hector was slaying the Greeks on the left of their battle, and Paris struck the Greek surgeon, Machaon, with an arrow; and Idomeneus bade Nestor put Machaon in his chariot and drive him to Nestor's hut, where his wound might be tended. Meanwhile, Hector sped to the centre of the line, where Ajax was slaying the Trojans; but Eurypylus, a Greek chief, was wounded by an arrow from the bow of Paris, and his friends guarded him with their shields and spears.

Thus the best of the Greeks were wounded and out of the battle, save Ajax, and the spearmen were in flight. Meanwhile Achilles was standing by the stern of his ship watching the defeat of the Greeks, but when he saw Machaon being carried past, sorely wounded, in the chariot of Nestor, he bade his friend Patroclus, whom he loved better than all the rest, to go and ask how Machaon did. He was sitting drinking wine with Nestor when Patroclus came, and Nestor told Patroclus how many of the chiefs were wounded, and though Patroclus was in a hurry Nestor began a very long story about his own great deeds of war, done when he was a young man. At last he bade Patroclus tell Achilles that, if he would not fight himself, he should at least send out his men under Patroclus, who should wear the splendid armour of Achilles. Then the Trojans would think that Achilles himself had returned to the battle, and they would be afraid, for none of them dared to meet Achilles hand to hand.

So Patroclus ran off to Achilles; but, on his way, he met the wounded Eurypylus, and he took him to his hut and cut the arrow out of his thigh with a knife, and washed the wound with warm water, and rubbed over it a bitter root to take the pain away. Thus he waited for some time with Eurypylus, but the advice of Nestor was in the end to cause the death of Patroclus. The battle now raged more fiercely, while Agamemnon and Diomede and Odysseus could only limp about leaning on their spears; and

again Agamemnon wished to moor the ships near shore, and embark in the night and run away.

But Odysseus was very angry with him, and said: “You should lead some other inglorious army, not us, who will fight on till every soul of us perish, rather than flee like cowards! Be silent, lest the soldiers hear you speaking of flight, such words as no man should utter. I wholly scorn your counsel, for the Greeks will lose heart if, in the midst of battle, you bid them launch the ships.”

Agamemnon was ashamed, and, by Diomede’s advice, the wounded kings went down to the verge of the war to encourage the others, though they were themselves unable to fight. They rallied the Greeks, and Ajax led them and struck Hector full in the breast with a great rock, so that his friends carried him out of the battle to the river side, where they poured water over him, but he lay fainting on the ground, the black blood gushing up from his mouth. While Hector lay there, and all men thought that he would die, Ajax and Idomeneus were driving back the Trojans, and it seemed that, even without Achilles and his men, the Greeks were able to hold their own against the Trojans. But the battle was never lost while Hector lived. People in those days believed in ‘omens’: they thought that the appearance of birds on the right or left hand meant good or bad luck. Once during the battle a Trojan showed Hector an unlucky bird, and wanted him to retreat into the town.

But Hector said, “One omen is the best: to fight for our own country.”

While Hector lay between death and life the Greeks were winning, for the Trojans had no other great chief to lead them. But Hector awoke from his faint, and leaped to his feet and ran here and there, encouraging the men of Troy. Then the most of the Greeks fled when they saw him; but Ajax and Idomeneus, and the rest of the bravest, formed in a square between the Trojans and the ships, and down on them came Hector and Aeneas and Paris, throwing their spears, and slaying on every hand.

The Greeks turned and ran, and the Trojans would have stopped to strip the armour from the slain men, but Hector cried: “Haste to the ships and leave the spoils of war. I will slay any man who lags behind!”

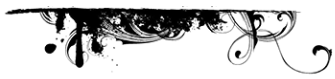
On this, all the Trojans drove their chariots down into the ditch that guarded the ships of the Greeks, as when a great wave sweeps at sea over the side of a vessel; and the Greeks were on the ship decks, thrusting with

very long spears, used in sea fights, and the Trojans were boarding the ships, and striking with swords and axes. Hector had a lighted torch and tried to set fire to the ship of Ajax; but Ajax kept him back with the long spear, and slew a Trojan, whose lighted torch fell from his hand.

And Ajax kept shouting: “Come on, and drive away Hector; it is not to a dance that he is calling his men, but to battle.”

The dead fell in heaps, and the living ran over them to mount the heaps of slain and climb the ships. Hector rushed forward like a sea wave against a great steep rock, but like the rock stood the Greeks; still the Trojans charged past the beaks of the foremost ships, while Ajax, thrusting with a spear more than twenty feet long, leaped from deck to deck like a man that drives four horses abreast, and leaps from the back of one to the back of another. Hector seized with his hand the stern of the ship of Protesilaus, the prince whom Paris shot when he leaped ashore on the day when the Greeks first landed; and Hector kept calling: “Bring fire!” and even Ajax, in this strange sea fight on land, left the decks and went below, thrusting with his spear through the portholes. Twelve men lay dead who had brought fire against the ship which Ajax guarded.

# The Slaying and Avenging of Patroclus



**AT THIS MOMENT**, when torches were blazing round the ships, and all seemed lost, Patroclus came out of the hut of Eurypylus, whose wound he had been tending, and he saw that the Greeks were in great danger, and ran weeping to Achilles.

"Why do you weep," said Achilles, "like a little girl that runs by her mother's side, and plucks at her gown and looks at her with tears in her eyes, till her mother takes her up in her arms? Is there bad news from home that your father is dead, or mine; or are you sorry that the Greeks are getting what they deserve for their folly?"

Then Patroclus told Achilles how Odysseus and many other princes were wounded and could not fight, and begged to be allowed to put on Achilles' armour and lead his men, who were all fresh and unwearied, into the battle, for a charge of two thousand fresh warriors might turn the fortune of the day.

Then Achilles was sorry that he had sworn not to fight himself till Hector brought fire to his own ships. He would lend Patroclus his armour, and his horses, and his men; but Patroclus must only drive the Trojans from the ships, and not pursue them. At this moment Ajax was weary, so many spears smote his armour, and he could hardly hold up his great shield, and Hector cut off his spearhead with the sword; the bronze head fell ringing on the ground, and Ajax brandished only the pointless shaft. So he shrank back and fire blazed all over his ship; and Achilles saw it, and smote his thigh, and bade Patroclus make haste. Patroclus armed himself in the shining armour of Achilles, which all Trojans feared, and leaped into the chariot where Automedon, the squire, had harnessed Xanthus and Balius, two horses that were the children, men said, of the West Wind, and a led horse was harnessed beside them in the side traces. Meanwhile the two thousand men of Achilles, who were called Myrmidons, had met in armour, five companies of four hundred apiece, under five chiefs of noble names. Forth they came, as eager as a pack of wolves that have eaten a

great red deer and run to slake their thirst with the dark water of a well in the hills.

So all in close array, helmet touching helmet and shield touching shield, like a moving wall of shining bronze, the men of Achilles charged, and Patroclus in the chariot led the way. Down they came at full speed on the flank of the Trojans, who saw the leader, and knew the bright armour and the horses of the terrible Achilles, and thought that he had returned to the war. Then each Trojan looked round to see by what way he could escape, and when men do that in battle they soon run by the way they have chosen. Patroclus rushed to the ship of Protesilaus, and slew the leader of the Trojans there, and drove them out, and quenched the fire; while they of Troy drew back from the ships, and Ajax and the other unwounded Greek princes leaped among them, smiting with sword and spear. Well did Hector know that the break in the battle had come again; but even so he stood, and did what he might, while the Trojans were driven back in disorder across the ditch, where the poles of many chariots were broken and the horses fled loose across the plain.

The horses of Achilles cleared the ditch, and Patroclus drove them between the Trojans and the wall of their own town, slaying many men, and, chief of all, Sarpedon, king of the Lycians; and round the body of Sarpedon the Trojans rallied under Hector, and the fight swayed this way and that, and there was such a noise of spears and swords smiting shields and helmets as when many woodcutters fell trees in a glen of the hills. At last the Trojans gave way, and the Greeks stripped the armour from the body of brave Sarpedon; but men say that Sleep and Death, like two winged angels, bore his body away to his own country. Now Patroclus forgot how Achilles had told him not to pursue the Trojans across the plain, but to return when he had driven them from the ships. On he raced, slaying as he went, even till he reached the foot of the wall of Troy. Thrice he tried to climb it, but thrice he fell back.

Hector was in his chariot in the gateway, and he bade his squire lash his horses into the war, and struck at no other man, great or small, but drove straight against Patroclus, who stood and threw a heavy stone at Hector; which missed him, but killed his charioteer. Then Patroclus leaped on the charioteer to strip his armour, but Hector stood over the body, grasping it by the head, while Patroclus dragged at the feet, and spears and arrows

flew in clouds around the fallen man. At last, towards sunset, the Greeks drew him out of the war, and Patroclus thrice charged into the thick of the Trojans. But the helmet of Achilles was loosened in the fight, and fell from the head of Patroclus, and he was wounded from behind, and Hector, in front, drove his spear clean through his body.

With his last breath Patroclus prophesied: “Death stands near thee, Hector, at the hands of noble Achilles.”

But Automedon was driving back the swift horses, carrying to Achilles the news that his dearest friend was slain.

After Odysseus was wounded, early in this great battle, he was not able to fight for several days, and, as the story is about Odysseus, we must tell quite shortly how Achilles returned to the war to take vengeance for Patroclus, and how he slew Hector. When Patroclus fell, Hector seized the armour which the Gods had given to Peleus, and Peleus to his son Achilles, while Achilles had lent it to Patroclus that he might terrify the Trojans. Retiring out of reach of spears, Hector took off his own armour and put on that of Achilles, and Greeks and Trojans fought for the dead body of Patroclus. Then Zeus, the chief of the Gods, looked down and said that Hector should never come home out of the battle to his wife, Andromache. But Hector returned into the fight around the dead Patroclus, and here all the best men fought, and even Automedon, who had been driving the chariot of Patroclus. Now when the Trojans seemed to have the better of the fight, the Greeks sent Antilochus, a son of old Nestor, to tell Achilles that his friend was slain, and Antilochus ran, and Ajax and his brother protected the Greeks who were trying to carry the body of Patroclus back to the ships.

Swiftly Antilochus came running to Achilles, saying: “Fallen is Patroclus, and they are fighting round his naked body, for Hector has his armour.”

Then Achilles said never a word, but fell on the floor of his hut, and threw black ashes on his yellow hair, till Antilochus seized his hands, fearing that he would cut his own throat with his dagger, for very sorrow. His mother, Thetis, arose from the sea to comfort him, but he said that he desired to die if he could not slay Hector, who had slain his friend. Then Thetis told him that he could not fight without armour, and now he had

none; but she would go to the God of armour-making and bring from him such a shield and helmet and breastplate as had never been seen by men.

Meanwhile the fight raged round the dead body of Patroclus, which was defiled with blood and dust, near the ships, and was being dragged this way and that, and torn and wounded. Achilles could not bear this sight, yet his mother had warned him not to enter without armour the battle where stones and arrows and spears were flying like hail; and he was so tall and broad that he could put on the arms of no other man. So he went down to the ditch as he was, unarmed, and as he stood high above it, against the red sunset, fire seemed to flow from his golden hair like the beacon blaze that soars into the dark sky when an island town is attacked at night, and men light beacons that their neighbours may see them and come to their help from other isles. There Achilles stood in a splendour of fire, and he shouted aloud, as clear as a clarion rings when men fall on to attack a besieged city wall. Thrice Achilles shouted mightily, and thrice the horses of the Trojans shuddered for fear and turned back from the onslaught, and thrice the men of Troy were confounded and shaken with terror. Then the Greeks drew the body of Patroclus out of the dust and the arrows, and laid him on a bier, and Achilles followed, weeping, for he had sent his friend with chariot and horses to the war; but home again he welcomed him never more. Then the sun set and it was night.

Now one of the Trojans wished Hector to retire within the walls of Troy, for certainly Achilles would tomorrow be foremost in the war.

But Hector said, “Have ye not had your fill of being shut up behind walls? Let Achilles fight; I will meet him in the open field.”

The Trojans cheered, and they camped in the plain, while in the hut of Achilles women washed the dead body of Patroclus, and Achilles swore that he would slay Hector.

In the dawn came Thetis, bearing to Achilles the new splendid armour that the God had made for him. Then Achilles put on that armour, and roused his men; but Odysseus, who knew all the rules of honour, would not let him fight till peace had been made, with a sacrifice and other ceremonies, between him and Agamemnon, and till Agamemnon had given him all the presents which Achilles had before refused. Achilles did not want them; he wanted only to fight, but Odysseus made him obey, and do what was usual. Then the gifts were brought, and Agamemnon stood up,

and said that he was sorry for his insolence, and the men took breakfast, but Achilles would neither eat nor drink. He mounted his chariot, but the horse Xanthus bowed his head till his long mane touched the ground, and, being a fairy horse, the child of the West Wind, he spoke (or so men said), and these were his words: “We shall bear thee swiftly and speedily, but thou shalt be slain in fight, and thy dying day is near at hand.”

“Well I know it,” said Achilles, “but I will not cease from fighting till I have given the Trojans their fill of war.”

So all that day he chased and slew the Trojans. He drove them into the river, and, though the river came down in a red flood, he crossed, and slew them on the plain. The plain caught fire, the bushes and long dry grass blazed round him, but he fought his way through the fire, and drove the Trojans to their walls. The gates were thrown open, and the Trojans rushed through like frightened fawns, and then they climbed to the battlements, and looked down in safety, while the whole Greek army advanced in line under their shields.

But Hector stood still, alone, in front of the gate, and old Priam, who saw Achilles rushing on, shining like a star in his new armour, called with tears to Hector, “Come within the gate! This man has slain many of my sons, and if he slays thee whom have I to help me in my old age?”

His mother also called to Hector, but he stood firm, waiting for Achilles. Now the story says that he was afraid, and ran thrice in full armour round Troy, with Achilles in pursuit. But this cannot be true, for no mortal men could run thrice, in heavy armour, with great shields that clanked against their ankles, round the town of Troy: moreover Hector was the bravest of men, and all the Trojan women were looking down at him from the walls.

We cannot believe that he ran away, and the story goes on to tell that he asked Achilles to make an agreement with him. The conqueror in the fight should give back the body of the fallen to be buried by his friends, but should keep his armour. But Achilles said that he could make no agreement with Hector, and threw his spear, which flew over Hector’s shoulder. Then Hector threw his spear, but it could not pierce the shield which the God had made for Achilles. Hector had no other spear, and Achilles had one, so Hector cried, “Let me not die without honour!” and drew his sword, and rushed at Achilles, who sprang to meet him, but

before Hector could come within a sword-stroke Achilles had sent his spear clean through the neck of Hector.

He fell in the dust and Achilles said, “Dogs and birds shall tear your flesh unburied.”

With his dying breath Hector prayed him to take gold from Priam, and give back his body to be burned in Troy.

But Achilles said, “Hound! Would that I could bring myself to carve and eat thy raw flesh, but dogs shall devour it, even if thy father offered me thy weight in gold.”

With his last words Hector prophesied and said, “Remember me in the day when Paris shall slay thee in the Scaean gate.”

Then his brave soul went to the land of the Dead, which the Greeks called Hades. To that land Odysseus sailed while he was still a living man, as the story tells later.

Then Achilles did a dreadful deed; he slit the feet of dead Hector from heel to ankle, and thrust thongs through, and bound him by the thongs to his chariot and trailed the body in the dust. All the women of Troy who were on the walls raised a shriek, and Hector’s wife, Andromache, heard the sound. She had been in an inner room of her house, weaving a purple web, and embroidering flowers on it, and she was calling her bower maidens to make ready a bath for Hector when he should come back tired from battle. But when she heard the cry from the wall she trembled, and the shuttle with which she was weaving fell from her hands.

“Surely I heard the cry of my husband’s mother,” she said, and she bade two of her maidens come with her to see why the people lamented.

She ran swiftly, and reached the battlements, and thence she saw her dear husband’s body being whirled through the dust towards the ships, behind the chariot of Achilles. Then night came over her eyes and she fainted. But when she returned to herself she cried out that now none would defend her little boy, and other children would push him away from feasts, saying, “Out with you; no father of thine is at our table,” and his father, Hector, would lie naked at the ships, unclad, unburned, unlamented. To be unburned and unburied was thought the greatest of misfortunes, because the dead man unburned could not go into the House of Hades, God of the Dead, but must always wander, alone and comfortless, in the dark borderland between the dead and the living.

# The Ransoming of Hector

**WHEN ACHILLES** was asleep that night the ghost of Patroclus came, saying, “Why dost thou not burn and bury me? For the other shadows of dead men suffer me not to come near them, and lonely I wander along the dark dwelling of Hades.”

Then Achilles awoke, and he sent men to cut down trees, and make a huge pile of fagots and logs. On this they laid Patroclus, covered with white linen, and then they slew many cattle, and Achilles cut the throats of twelve Trojan prisoners of war, meaning to burn them with Patroclus to do him honour. This was a deed of shame, for Achilles was mad with sorrow and anger for the death of his friend. Then they drenched with wine the great pile of wood, which was thirty yards long and broad, and set fire to it, and the fire blazed all through the night and died down in the morning. They put the white bones of Patroclus in a golden casket, and laid it in the hut of Achilles, who said that, when he died, they must burn his body, and mix the ashes with the ashes of his friend, and build over it a chamber of stone, and cover the chamber with a great hill of earth, and set a pillar of stone above it. This is one of the hills on the plain of Troy, but the pillar has fallen from the tomb, long ago.

Then, as the custom was, Achilles held games – chariot races, foot races, boxing, wrestling, and archery – in honour of Patroclus. Odysseus won the prize for the foot race, and for the wrestling, so now his wound must have been healed.

But Achilles still kept trailing Hector’s dead body each day round the hill that had been raised for the tomb of Patroclus, till the Gods in heaven were angry, and bade Thetis tell her son that he must give back the dead body to Priam, and take ransom for it, and they sent a messenger to Priam to bid him redeem the body of his son. It was terrible for Priam to have to go and humble himself before Achilles, whose hands had been red with the blood of his sons, but he did not disobey the Gods. He opened his chests, and took out twenty-four beautiful embroidered changes of raiment; and he weighed out ten heavy bars, or talents, of gold, and chose a beautiful

golden cup, and he called nine of his sons, Paris, and Helenus, and Deiphobus, and the rest, saying, “Go, ye bad sons, my shame; would that Hector lived and all of you were dead!” for sorrow made him angry; “go, and get ready for me a wain, and lay on it these treasures.”

So they harnessed mules to the wain, and placed in it the treasures, and, after praying, Priam drove through the night to the hut of Achilles. In he went, when no man looked for him, and kneeled to Achilles, and kissed his terrible death-dealing hands. “Have pity on me, and fear the Gods, and give me back my dead son,” he said, “and remember thine own father. Have pity on me, who have endured to do what no man born has ever done before, to kiss the hands that slew my sons.”

Then Achilles remembered his own father, far away, who now was old and weak: and he wept, and Priam wept with him, and then Achilles raised Priam from his knees and spoke kindly to him, admiring how beautiful he still was in his old age, and Priam himself wondered at the beauty of Achilles. And Achilles thought how Priam had long been rich and happy, like his own father, Peleus, and now old age and weakness and sorrow were laid upon both of them, for Achilles knew that his own day of death was at hand, even at the doors. So Achilles bade the women make ready the body of Hector for burial, and they clothed him in a white mantle that Priam had brought, and laid him in the wain; and supper was made ready, and Priam and Achilles ate and drank together, and the women spread a bed for Priam, who would not stay long, but stole away back to Troy while Achilles was asleep.

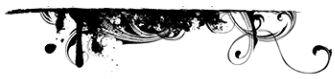
All the women came out to meet him, and to lament for Hector. They carried the body into the house of Andromache and laid it on a bed, and the women gathered around, and each in turn sang her song over the great dead warrior.

His mother bewailed him, and his wife, and Helen of the fair hands, clad in dark mourning raiment, lifted up her white arms, and said: “Hector, of all my brethren in Troy thou wert the dearest, since Paris brought me hither. Would that ere that day I had died! For this is now the twentieth year since I came, and in all these twenty years never heard I a word from thee that was bitter and unkind; others might upbraid me, thy sisters or thy mother, for thy father was good to me as if he had been my own; but then thou wouldst restrain them that spoke evil by the courtesy of thy heart and

thy gentle words. Ah! Woe for thee, and woe for me, whom all men shudder at, for there is now none in wide Troyland to be my friend like thee, my brother and my friend!”

So Helen lamented, but now was done all that men might do; a great pile of wood was raised, and Hector was burned, and his ashes were placed in a golden urn, in a dark chamber of stone, within a hollow hill.

# How Odysseus Stole the Luck of Troy



**AFTER HECTOR WAS BURIED**, the siege went on slowly, as it had done during the first nine years of the war. The Greeks did not know at that time how to besiege a city, as we saw, by way of digging trenches and building towers, and battering the walls with machines that threw heavy stones. The Trojans had lost courage, and dared not go into the open plain, and they were waiting for the coming up of new armies of allies – the Amazons, who were girl warriors from far away, and an Eastern people called the Khita, whose king was Memnon, the son of the Bright Dawn.

Now everyone knew that, in the temple of the Goddess Pallas-Athene, in Troy, was a sacred image, which fell from heaven, called the Palladium, and this very ancient image was the Luck of Troy. While it remained safe in the temple people believed that Troy could never be taken, but as it was in a guarded temple in the middle of the town, and was watched by priestesses day and night, it seemed impossible that the Greeks should ever enter the city secretly and steal the Luck away.

As Odysseus was the grandson of Autolycus, the Master Thief, he often wished that the old man was with the Greeks, for if there was a thing to steal Autolycus could steal it. But by this time Autolycus was dead, and so Odysseus could only puzzle over the way to steal the Luck of Troy, and wonder how his grandfather would have set about it. He prayed for help secretly to Hermes, the God of Thieves, when he sacrificed goats to him, and at last he had a plan.

There was a story that Anius, the King of the Isle of Delos, had three daughters, named Oeno, Spermo, and Elais, and that Oeno could turn water into wine, while Spermo could turn stones into bread, and Elais could change mud into olive oil. Those fairy gifts, people said, were given to the maidens by the Wine God, Dionysus, and by the Goddess of Corn, Demeter. Now corn, and wine, and oil were sorely needed by the Greeks, who were tired of paying much gold and bronze to the Phoenician merchants for their supplies. Odysseus therefore went to Agamemnon one day, and asked leave to take his ship and voyage to Delos, to bring, if he

could, the three maidens to the camp, if indeed they could do these miracles. As no fighting was going on, Agamemnon gave Odysseus leave to depart, so he went on board his ship, with a crew of fifty men of Ithaca, and away they sailed, promising to return in a month.

Two or three days after that, a dirty old beggar man began to be seen in the Greek camp. He had crawled in late one evening, dressed in a dirty smock and a very dirty old cloak, full of holes, and stained with smoke. Over everything he wore the skin of a stag, with half the hair worn off, and he carried a staff, and a filthy tattered wallet, to put food in, which swung from his neck by a cord. He came crouching and smiling up to the door of the hut of Diomede, and sat down just within the doorway, where beggars still sit in the East. Diomede saw him, and sent him a loaf and two handfuls of flesh, which the beggar laid on his wallet, between his feet, and he made his supper greedily, gnawing a bone like a dog.

After supper Diomede asked him who he was and whence he came, and he told a long story about how he had been a Cretan pirate, and had been taken prisoner by the Egyptians when he was robbing there, and how he had worked for many years in their stone quarries, where the sun had burned him brown, and had escaped by hiding among the great stones, carried down the Nile in a raft, for building a temple on the seashore. The raft arrived at night, and the beggar said that he stole out from it in the dark and found a Phoenician ship in the harbour, and the Phoenicians took him on board, meaning to sell him somewhere as a slave. But a tempest came on and wrecked the ship off the Isle of Tenedos, which is near Troy, and the beggar alone escaped to the island on a plank of the ship. From Tenedos he had come to Troy in a fisher’s boat, hoping to make himself useful in the camp, and earn enough to keep body and soul together till he could find a ship sailing to Crete.

He made his story rather amusing, describing the strange ways of the Egyptians; how they worshipped cats and bulls, and did everything in just the opposite of the Greek way of doing things. So Diomede let him have a rug and blankets to sleep on in the portico of the hut, and next day the old wretch went begging about the camp and talking with the soldiers. Now he was a most impudent and annoying old vagabond, and was always in quarrels. If there was a disagreeable story about the father or grandfather of any of the princes, he knew it and told it, so that he got a blow from the

baton of Agamemnon, and Ajax gave him a kick, and Idomeneus drubbed him with the butt of his spear for a tale about his grandmother, and everybody hated him and called him a nuisance. He was for ever jeering at Odysseus, who was far away, and telling tales about Autolycus, and at last he stole a gold cup, a very large cup, with two handles, and a dove sitting on each handle, from the hut of Nestor. The old chief was fond of this cup, which he had brought from home, and, when it was found in the beggar's dirty wallet, everybody cried that he must be driven out of the camp and well whipped. So Nestor's son, young Thrasymedes, with other young men, laughing and shouting, pushed and dragged the beggar close up to the Scaean gate of Troy, where Thrasymedes called with a loud voice, "O Trojans, we are sick of this shameless beggar. First we shall whip him well, and if he comes back we shall put out his eyes and cut off his hands and feet, and give him to the dogs to eat. He may go to you, if he likes; if not, he must wander till he dies of hunger."

The young men of Troy heard this and laughed, and a crowd gathered on the wall to see the beggar punished. So Thrasymedes whipped him with his bowstring till he was tired, and they did not leave off beating the beggar till he ceased howling and fell, all bleeding, and lay still. Then Thrasymedes gave him a parting kick, and went away with his friends. The beggar lay quiet for some time, then he began to stir, and sat up, wiping the tears from his eyes, and shouting curses and bad words after the Greeks, praying that they might be speared in the back, and eaten by dogs.

At last he tried to stand up, but fell down again, and began to crawl on hands and knees towards the Scaean gate. There he sat down, within the two side walls of the gate, where he cried and lamented. Now Helen of the fair hands came down from the gate tower, being sorry to see any man treated so much worse than a beast, and she spoke to the beggar and asked him why he had been used in this cruel way?

At first he only moaned, and rubbed his sore sides, but at last he said that he was an unhappy man, who had been shipwrecked, and was begging his way home, and that the Greeks suspected him of being a spy sent out by the Trojans. But he had been in Lacedaemon, her own country, he said, and could tell her about her father, if she were, as he supposed, the beautiful Helen, and about her brothers, Castor and Polydeuces, and her little daughter, Hermione.

“But perhaps,” he said, “you are no mortal woman, but some goddess who favours the Trojans, and if indeed you are a goddess then I liken you to Aphrodite, for beauty, and stature, and shapeliness.”

Then Helen wept; for many a year had passed since she had heard any word of her father, and daughter, and her brothers, who were dead, though she knew it not. So she stretched out her white hand, and raised the beggar, who was kneeling at her feet, and bade him follow her to her own house, within the palace garden of King Priam.

Helen walked forward, with a bower maiden at either side, and the beggar crawling after her. When she had entered her house, Paris was not there, so she ordered the bath to be filled with warm water, and new clothes to be brought, and she herself washed the old beggar and anointed him with oil. This appears very strange to us, for though Saint Elizabeth of Hungary used to wash and clothe beggars, we are surprised that Helen should do so, who was not a saint. But long afterwards she herself told the son of Odysseus, Telemachus, that she had washed his father when he came into Troy disguised as a beggar who had been sorely beaten.

You must have guessed that the beggar was Odysseus, who had not gone to Delos in his ship, but stolen back in a boat, and appeared disguised among the Greeks. He did all this to make sure that nobody could recognise him, and he behaved so as to deserve a whipping that he might not be suspected as a Greek spy by the Trojans, but rather be pitied by them. Certainly he deserved his name of ‘the much-enduring Odysseus.’

Meanwhile he sat in his bath and Helen washed his feet. But when she had done, and had anointed his wounds with olive oil, and when she had clothed him in a white tunic and a purple mantle, then she opened her lips to cry out with amazement, for she knew Odysseus; but he laid his finger on her lips, saying “Hush!” Then she remembered how great danger he was in, for the Trojans, if they found him, would put him to some cruel death, and she sat down, trembling and weeping, while he watched her.

“Oh thou strange one,” she said, “how enduring is thy heart and how cunning beyond measure! How hast thou borne to be thus beaten and disgraced, and to come within the walls of Troy? Well it is for thee that Paris, my lord, is far from home, having gone to guide Penthesilea, the Queen of the warrior maids whom men call Amazons, who is on her way to help the Trojans.”

Then Odysseus smiled, and Helen saw that she had said a word which she ought not to have spoken, and had revealed the secret hope of the Trojans.

Then she wept, and said, “Oh cruel and cunning! You have made me betray the people with whom I live, though woe is me that ever I left my own people, and my husband dear, and my child! And now if you escape alive out of Troy, you will tell the Greeks, and they will lie in ambush by night for the Amazons on the way to Troy and will slay them all. If you and I were not friends long ago, I would tell the Trojans that you are here, and they would give your body to the dogs to eat, and fix your head on the palisade above the wall. Woe is me that ever I was born.”

Odysseus answered, “Lady, as you have said, we two are friends from of old, and your friend I will be till the last, when the Greeks break into Troy, and slay the men, and carry the women captives. If I live till that hour no man shall harm you, but safely and in honour you shall come to your palace in Lacedaemon of the rifted hills. Moreover, I swear to you a great oath, by Zeus above, and by Them that under earth punish the souls of men who swear falsely, that I shall tell no man the thing which you have spoken.”

So when he had sworn and done that oath, Helen was comforted and dried her tears. Then she told him how unhappy she was, and how she had lost her last comfort when Hector died. “Always am I wretched,” she said, “save when sweet sleep falls on me. Now the wife of Thon, King of Egypt, gave me this gift when we were in Egypt, on our way to Troy, namely, a drug that brings sleep even to the most unhappy, and it is pressed from the poppy heads of the garland of the God of Sleep.”

Then she showed him strange phials of gold, full of this drug: phials wrought by the Egyptians, and covered with magic spells and shapes of beasts and flowers.

“One of these I will give you,” she said, “that even from Troy town you may not go without a gift in memory of the hands of Helen.”

So Odysseus took the phial of gold, and was glad in his heart, and Helen set before him meat and wine. When he had eaten and drunk, and his strength had come back to him, he said:

“Now I must dress me again in my old rags, and take my wallet, and my staff, and go forth, and beg through Troy town. For here I must abide for some days as a beggar man, lest if I now escape from your house in the

night the Trojans may think that you have told me the secrets of their counsel, which I am carrying to the Greeks, and may be angry with you."

So he clothed himself again as a beggar, and took his staff, and hid the phial of gold with the Egyptian drug in his rags, and in his wallet also he put the new clothes that Helen had given him, and a sword, and he took farewell, saying, "Be of good heart, for the end of your sorrows is at hand. But if you see me among the beggars in the street, or by the well, take no heed of me, only I will salute you as a beggar who has been kindly treated by a Queen."

So they parted, and Odysseus went out, and when it was day he was with the beggars in the streets, but by night he commonly slept near the fire of a smithy forge, as is the way of beggars. So for some days he begged, saying that he was gathering food to eat while he walked to some town far away that was at peace, where he might find work to do. He was not impudent now, and did not go to rich men's houses or tell evil tales, or laugh, but he was much in the temples, praying to the Gods, and above all in the temple of Pallas-Athene. The Trojans thought that he was a pious man for a beggar.

Now there was a custom in these times that men and women who were sick or in distress, should sleep at night on the floors of the temples. They did this hoping that the God would send them a dream to show them how their diseases might be cured, or how they might find what they had lost, or might escape from their distresses.

Odysseus slept in more than one temple, and once in that of Pallas-Athene, and the priests and priestesses were kind to him, and gave him food in the morning when the gates of the temple were opened.

In the temple of Pallas-Athene, where the Luck of Troy lay always on her altar, the custom was that priestesses kept watch, each for two hours, all through the night, and soldiers kept guard within call. So one night Odysseus slept there, on the floor, with other distressed people, seeking for dreams from the Gods. He lay still all through the night till the turn of the last priestess came to watch. The priestess used to walk up and down with bare feet among the dreaming people, having a torch in her hand, and muttering hymns to the Goddess. Then Odysseus, when her back was turned, slipped the gold phial out of his rags, and let it lie on the polished floor beside him. When the priestess came back again, the light from her

torch fell on the glittering phial, and she stooped and picked it up, and looked at it curiously. There came from it a sweet fragrance, and she opened it, and tasted the drug. It seemed to her the sweetest thing that ever she had tasted, and she took more and more, and then closed the phial and laid it down, and went along murmuring her hymn.

But soon a great drowsiness came over her, and she sat down on the step of the altar, and fell sound asleep, and the torch sunk in her hand, and went out, and all was dark. Then Odysseus put the phial in his wallet, and crept very cautiously to the altar, in the dark, and stole the Luck of Troy. It was only a small black mass of what is now called meteoric iron, which sometimes comes down with meteorites from the sky, but it was shaped like a shield, and the people thought it an image of the warlike shielded Goddess, fallen from Heaven. Such sacred shields, made of glass and ivory, are found deep in the earth in the ruined cities of Odysseus' time. Swiftly Odysseus hid the Luck in his rags and left in its place on the altar a copy of the Luck, which he had made of blackened clay. Then he stole back to the place where he had lain, and remained there till dawn appeared, and the sleepers who sought for dreams awoke, and the temple gates were opened, and Odysseus walked out with the rest of them.

He stole down a lane, where as yet no people were stirring, and crept along, leaning on his staff, till he came to the eastern gate, at the back of the city, which the Greeks never attacked, for they had never drawn their army in a circle round the town. There Odysseus explained to the sentinels that he had gathered food enough to last for a long journey to some other town, and opened his bag, which seemed full of bread and broken meat. The soldiers said he was a lucky beggar, and let him out. He walked slowly along the waggon road by which wood was brought into Troy from the forests on Mount Ida, and when he found that nobody was within sight he slipped into the forest, and stole into a dark thicket, hiding beneath the tangled boughs. Here he lay and slept till evening, and then took the new clothes which Helen had given him out of his wallet, and put them on, and threw the belt of the sword over his shoulder, and hid the Luck of Troy in his bosom. He washed himself clean in a mountain brook, and now all who saw him must have known that he was no beggar, but Odysseus of Ithaca, Laertes' son.

So he walked cautiously down the side of the brook which ran between high banks deep in trees, and followed it till it reached the river Xanthus, on the left of the Greek lines. Here he found Greek sentinels set to guard the camp, who cried aloud in joy and surprise, for his ship had not yet returned from Delos, and they could not guess how Odysseus had come back alone across the sea. So two of the sentinels guarded Odysseus to the hut of Agamemnon, where he and Achilles and all the chiefs were sitting at a feast. They all leaped up, but when Odysseus took the Luck of Troy from within his mantle, they cried that this was the bravest deed that had been done in the war, and they sacrificed ten oxen to Zeus.

"So you were the old beggar," said young Thrasymedes.

"Yes," said Odysseus, "and when next you beat a beggar, Thrasymedes, do not strike so hard and so long."

That night all the Greeks were full of hope, for now they had the Luck of Troy, but the Trojans were in despair, and guessed that the beggar was the thief, and that Odysseus had been the beggar. The priestess, Theano, could tell them nothing; they found her, with the extinguished torch drooping in her hand, asleep, as she sat on the step of the altar, and she never woke again.

# The Death of Achilles

**ODYSSEUS THOUGHT MUCH** and often of Helen, without whose kindness he could not have saved the Greeks by stealing the Luck of Troy. He saw that, though she remained as beautiful as when the princes all sought her hand, she was most unhappy, knowing herself to be the cause of so much misery, and fearing what the future might bring. Odysseus told nobody about the secret which she had let fall, the coming of the Amazons.

The Amazons were a race of warlike maids, who lived far away on the banks of the river Thermodon. They had fought against Troy in former times, and one of the great hill-graves on the plain of Troy covered the ashes of an Amazon, swift-footed Myrine. People believed that they were the daughters of the God of War, and they were reckoned equal in battle to the bravest men. Their young Queen, Penthesilea, had two reasons for coming to fight at Troy: one was her ambition to win renown, and the other her sleepless sorrow for having accidentally killed her sister, Hippolyte, when hunting. The spear which she threw at a stag struck Hippolyte and slew her, and Penthesilea cared no longer for her own life, and desired to fall gloriously in battle. So Penthesilea and her bodyguard of twelve Amazons set forth from the wide streams of Thermodon, and rode into Troy. The story says that they did not drive in chariots, like all the Greek and Trojan chiefs, but rode horses, which must have been the manner of their country.

Penthesilea was the tallest and most beautiful of the Amazons, and shone among her twelve maidens like the moon among the stars, or the bright Dawn among the Hours which follow her chariot wheels. The Trojans rejoiced when they beheld her, for she looked both terrible and beautiful, with a frown on her brow, and fair shining eyes, and a blush on her cheeks. To the Trojans she came like Iris, the Rainbow, after a storm, and they gathered round her cheering, and throwing flowers and kissing her stirrup, as the people of Orleans welcomed Joan of Arc when she came to deliver them. Even Priam was glad, as is a man long blind, when he has been

healed, and again looks upon the light of the sun. Priam held a great feast, and gave to Penthesilea many beautiful gifts: cups of gold, and embroideries, and a sword with a hilt of silver, and she vowed that she would slay Achilles. But when Andromache, the wife of Hector, heard her she said within herself, “Ah, unhappy girl, what is this boast of thine! Thou hast not the strength to fight the unconquerable son of Peleus, for if Hector could not slay him, what chance hast thou? But the piled-up earth covers Hector!”

In the morning Penthesilea sprang up from sleep and put on her glorious armour, with spear in hand, and sword at side, and bow and quiver hung behind her back, and her great shield covering her side from neck to stirrup, and mounted her horse, and galloped to the plain. Beside her charged the twelve maidens of her bodyguard, and all the company of Hector’s brothers and kinsfolk. These headed the Trojan lines, and they rushed towards the ships of the Greeks.

Then the Greeks asked each other, “Who is this that leads the Trojans as Hector led them, surely some God rides in the van of the charioteers!”

Odysseus could have told them who the new leader of the Trojans was, but it seems that he had not the heart to fight against women, for his name is not mentioned in this day’s battle. So the two lines clashed, and the plain of Troy ran red with blood, for Penthesilea slew Molios, and Persinoos, and Eilissos, and Antiphates, and Lernos high of heart, and Hippalmos of the loud warcry, and Haemonides, and strong Elasippus, while her maidens Derinoe and Clonie slew each a chief of the Greeks. But Clonie fell beneath the spear of Podarkes, whose hand Penthesilea cut off with the sword, while Idomeneus speared the Amazon Bremousa, and Meriones of Crete slew Evadre, and Diomede killed Alcibie and Derimacheia in close fight with the sword, so the company of the Twelve were thinned, the bodyguard of Penthesilea.

The Trojans and Greeks kept slaying each other, but Penthesilea avenged her maidens, driving the ranks of Greece as a lioness drives the cattle on the hills, for they could not stand before her.

Then she shouted, “Dogs! Today shall you pay for the sorrows of Priam! Where is Diomede, where is Achilles, where is Ajax, that, men say, are your bravest? Will none of them stand before my spear?”

Then she charged again, at the head of the Household of Priam, brothers and kinsmen of Hector, and where they came the Greeks fell like yellow leaves before the wind of autumn. The white horse that Penthesilea rode, a gift from the wife of the North Wind, flashed like lightning through a dark cloud among the companies of the Greeks, and the chariots that followed the charge of the Amazon rocked as they swept over the bodies of the slain. Then the old Trojans, watching from the walls, cried: “This is no mortal maiden but a Goddess, and today she will burn the ships of the Greeks, and they will all perish in Troyland, and see Greece never more again.”

Now it so was that Ajax and Achilles had not heard the din and the cry of war, for both had gone to weep over the great new grave of Patroclus. Penthesilea and the Trojans had driven back the Greeks within their ditch, and they were hiding here and there among the ships, and torches were blazing in men’s hands to burn the ships, as in the day of the valour of Hector: when Ajax heard the din of battle, and called to Achilles to make speed towards the ships.

So they ran swiftly to their huts, and armed themselves, and Ajax fell smiting and slaying upon the Trojans, but Achilles slew five of the bodyguard of Penthesilea. She, beholding her maidens fallen, rode straight against Ajax and Achilles, like a dove defying two falcons, and cast her spear, but it fell back blunted from the glorious shield that the God had made for the son of Peleus.

Then she threw another spear at Ajax, crying, “I am the daughter of the God of War,” but his armour kept out the spear, and he and Achilles laughed aloud.

Ajax paid no more heed to the Amazon, but rushed against the Trojan men; while Achilles raised the heavy spear that none but he could throw, and drove it down through breastplate and breast of Penthesilea, yet still her hand grasped her sword-hilt. But, ere she could draw her sword, Achilles speared her horse, and horse and rider fell, and died in their fall.

There lay fair Penthesilea in the dust, like a tall poplar tree that the wind has overthrown, and her helmet fell, and the Greeks who gathered round marvelled to see her lie so beautiful in death, like Artemis, the Goddess of the Woods, when she sleeps alone, weary with hunting on the hills. Then the heart of Achilles was pierced with pity and sorrow, thinking how she

might have been his wife in his own country, had he spared her, but he was never to see pleasant Phthia, his native land, again. So Achilles stood and wept over Penthesilea dead.

Now the Greeks, in pity and sorrow, held their hands, and did not pursue the Trojans who had fled, nor did they strip the armour from Penthesilea and her twelve maidens, but laid the bodies on biers, and sent them back in peace to Priam. Then the Trojans burned Penthesilea in the midst of her dead maidens, on a great pile of dry wood, and placed their ashes in a golden casket, and buried them all in the great hill-grave of Laomedon, an ancient King of Troy, while the Greeks with lamentation buried them whom the Amazon had slain.

The old men of Troy and the chiefs now held a council, and Priam said that they must not yet despair, for, if they had lost many of their bravest warriors, many of the Greeks had also fallen. Their best plan was to fight only with arrows from the walls and towers, till King Memnon came to their rescue with a great army of Aethiopes. Now Memnon was the son of the bright Dawn, a beautiful Goddess who had loved and married a mortal man, Tithonus. She had asked Zeus, the chief of the Gods, to make her lover immortal, and her prayer was granted. Tithonus could not die, but he began to grow grey, and then white haired, with a long white beard, and very weak, till nothing of him seemed to be left but his voice, always feebly chattering like the grasshoppers on a summer day.

Memnon was the most beautiful of men, except Paris and Achilles, and his home was in a country that borders on the land of sunrising. There he was reared by the lily maidens called Hesperides, till he came to his full strength, and commanded the whole army of the Aethiopes. For their arrival Priam wished to wait, but Polydamas advised that the Trojans should give back Helen to the Greeks, with jewels twice as valuable as those which she had brought from the house of Menelaus. Then Paris was very angry, and said that Polydamas was a coward, for it was little to Paris that Troy should be taken and burned in a month if for a month he could keep Helen of the fair hands.

At length Memnon came, leading a great army of men who had nothing white about them but the teeth, so fiercely the sun burned on them in their own country. The Trojans had all the more hopes of Memnon because, on his long journey from the land of sunrising, and the river Oceanus that

girdles the round world, he had been obliged to cross the country of the Solymi. Now the Solymi were the fiercest of men and rose up against Memnon, but he and his army fought them for a whole day, and defeated them, and drove them to the hills. When Memnon came, Priam gave him a great cup of gold, full of wine to the brim, and Memnon drank the wine at one draught. But he did not make great boasts of what he could do, like poor Penthesilea,

"For," said he, "whether I am a good man at arms will be known in battle, where the strength of men is tried. So now let us turn to sleep, for to wake and drink wine all through the night is an ill beginning of war."

Then Priam praised his wisdom, and all men betook them to bed, but the bright Dawn rose unwillingly next day, to throw light on the battle where her son was to risk his life. Then Memnon led out the dark clouds of his men into the plain, and the Greeks foreboded evil when they saw so great a new army of fresh and unwearied warriors, but Achilles, leading them in his shining armour, gave them courage. Memnon fell upon the left wing of the Greeks, and on the men of Nestor, and first he slew Ereuthus, and then attacked Nestor's young son, Antilochus, who, now that Patroclus had fallen, was the dearest friend of Achilles. On him Memnon leaped, like a lion on a kid, but Antilochus lifted a huge stone from the plain, a pillar that had been set on the tomb of some great warrior long ago, and the stone smote full on the helmet of Memnon, who reeled beneath the stroke. But Memnon seized his heavy spear, and drove it through shield and corselet of Antilochus, even into his heart, and he fell and died beneath his father's eyes.

Then Nestor in great sorrow and anger strode across the body of Antilochus and called to his other son, Thrasymedes, "Come and drive afar this man that has slain thy brother, for if fear be in thy heart thou art no son of mine, nor of the race of Periclymenus, who stood up in battle even against the strong man Heracles!"

But Memnon was too strong for Thrasymedes, and drove him off, while old Nestor himself charged sword in hand, though Memnon bade him begone, for he was not minded to strike so aged a man, and Nestor drew back, for he was weak with age. Then Memnon and his army charged the Greeks, slaying and stripping the dead. But Nestor had mounted his chariot and driven to Achilles, weeping, and imploring him to come swiftly and

save the body of Antilochus, and he sped to meet Memnon, who lifted a great stone, the landmark of a field, and drove it against the shield of the son of Peleus. But Achilles was not shaken by the blow; he ran forward, and wounded Memnon over the rim of his shield. Yet wounded as he was Memnon fought on and struck his spear through the arm of Achilles, for the Greeks fought with no sleeves of bronze to protect their arms.

Then Achilles drew his great sword, and flew on Memnon, and with sword-strokes they lashed at each other on shield and helmet, and the long horsehair crests of the helmets were shorn off, and flew down the wind, and their shields rang terribly beneath the sword strokes. They thrust at each others' throats between shield and visor of the helmet, they smote at knee, and thrust at breast, and the armour rang about their bodies, and the dust from beneath their feet rose up in a cloud around them, like mist round the falls of a great river in flood. So they fought, neither of them yielding a step, till Achilles made so rapid a thrust that Memnon could not parry it, and the bronze sword passed clean through his body beneath the breast-bone, and he fell, and his armour clashed as he fell.

Then Achilles, wounded as he was and weak from loss of blood, did not stay to strip the golden armour of Memnon, but shouted his warcry, and pressed on, for he hoped to enter the gate of Troy with the fleeing Trojans, and all the Greeks followed after him. So they pursued, slaying as they went, and the Scaean gate was choked with the crowd of men, pursuing and pursued. In that hour would the Greeks have entered Troy, and burned the city, and taken the women captive, but Paris stood on the tower above the gate, and in his mind was anger for the death of his brother Hector. He tried the string of his bow, and found it frayed, for all day he had showered his arrows on the Greeks; so he chose a new bowstring, and fitted it, and strung the bow, and chose an arrow from his quiver, and aimed at the ankle of Achilles, where it was bare beneath the greave, or leg-guard of metal, that the God had fashioned for him. Through the ankle flew the arrow, and Achilles wheeled round, weak as he was, and stumbled, and fell, and the armour that the God had wrought was defiled with dust and blood.

Then Achilles rose again, and cried: "What coward has smitten me with a secret arrow from afar? Let him stand forth and meet me with sword and spear!"

So speaking he seized the shaft with his strong hands and tore it out of the wound, and much blood gushed, and darkness came over his eyes. Yet he staggered forward, striking blindly, and smote Orythaon, a dear friend of Hector, through the helmet, and others he smote, but now his force failed him, and he leaned on his spear, and cried his warcry, and said, “Cowards of Troy, ye shall not all escape my spear, dying as I am.”

But as he spoke he fell, and all his armour rang around him, yet the Trojans stood apart and watched; and as hunters watch a dying lion not daring to go nigh him, so the Trojans stood in fear till Achilles drew his latest breath. Then from the wall the Trojan women raised a great cry of joy over him who had slain the noble Hector: and thus was fulfilled the prophecy of Hector, that Achilles should fall in the Scaean gateway, by the hand of Paris.

Then the best of the Trojans rushed forth from the gate to seize the body of Achilles, and his glorious armour, but the Greeks were as eager to carry the body to the ships that it might have due burial. Round the dead Achilles men fought long and sore, and both sides were mixed, Greeks and Trojans, so that men dared not shoot arrows from the walls of Troy lest they should kill their own friends. Paris, and Aeneas, and Glaucus, who had been the friend of Sarpedon, led the Trojans, and Ajax and Odysseus led the Greeks, for we are not told that Agamemnon was fighting in this great battle of the war. Now as angry wild bees flock round a man who is taking their honeycombs, so the Trojans gathered round Ajax, striving to stab him, but he set his great shield in front, and smote and slew all that came within reach of his spear. Odysseus, too, struck down many, and though a spear was thrown and pierced his leg near the knee he stood firm, protecting the body of Achilles. At last Odysseus caught the body of Achilles by the hands, and heaved it upon his back, and so limped towards the ships, but Ajax and the men of Ajax followed, turning round if ever the Trojans ventured to come near, and charging into the midst of them. Thus very slowly they bore the dead Achilles across the plain, through the bodies of the fallen and the blood, till they met Nestor in his chariot and placed Achilles therein, and swiftly Nestor drove to the ships.

There the women, weeping, washed Achilles’ comely body, and laid him on a bier with a great white mantle over him, and all the women lamented and sang dirges, and the first was Briseis, who loved Achilles better than

her own country, and her father, and her brothers whom he had slain in war. The Greek princes, too, stood round the body, weeping and cutting off their long locks of yellow hair, a token of grief and an offering to the dead.

Men say that forth from the sea came Thetis of the silver feet, the mother of Achilles, with her ladies, the deathless maidens of the waters. They rose up from their glassy chambers below the sea, moving on, many and beautiful, like the waves on a summer day, and their sweet song echoed along the shores, and fear came upon the Greeks. Then they would have fled, but Nestor cried: “Hold, flee not, young lords of the Achaeans! Lo, she that comes from the sea is his mother, with the deathless maidens of the waters, to look on the face of her dead son.” Then the sea nymphs stood around the dead Achilles and clothed him in the garments of the Gods, fragrant raiment, and all the Nine Muses, one to the other replying with sweet voices, began their lament.

Next the Greeks made a great pile of dry wood, and laid Achilles on it, and set fire to it, till the flames had consumed his body except the white ashes. These they placed in a great golden cup and mingled with them the ashes of Patroclus, and above all they built a tomb like a hill, high on a headland above the sea, that men for all time may see it as they go sailing by, and may remember Achilles. Next they held in his honour foot races and chariot races, and other games, and Thetis gave splendid prizes. Last of all, when the games were ended, Thetis placed before the chiefs the glorious armour that the God had made for her son on the night after the slaying of Patroclus by Hector. “Let these arms be the prize of the best of the Greeks,” she said, “and of him that saved the body of Achilles out of the hands of the Trojans.”

Then stood up on one side Ajax and on the other Odysseus, for these two had rescued the body, and neither thought himself a worse warrior than the other. Both were the bravest of the brave, and if Ajax was the taller and stronger, and upheld the fight at the ships on the day of the valour of Hector; Odysseus had alone withstood the Trojans, and refused to retreat even when wounded, and his courage and cunning had won for the Greeks the Luck of Troy.

Therefore old Nestor arose and said: “This is a luckless day, when the best of the Greeks are rivals for such a prize. He who is not the winner will be heavy at heart, and will not stand firm by us in battle, as of old, and

hence will come great loss to the Greeks. Who can be a just judge in this question, for some men will love Ajax better, and some will prefer Odysseus, and thus will arise disputes among ourselves. Lo! Have we not here among us many Trojan prisoners, waiting till their friends pay their ransom in cattle and gold and bronze and iron? These hate all the Greeks alike, and will favour neither Ajax nor Odysseus. Let *them* be the judges, and decide who is the best of the Greeks, and the man who has done most harm to the Trojans."

Agamemnon said that Nestor had spoken wisely. The Trojans were then made to sit as judges in the midst of the Assembly, and Ajax and Odysseus spoke, and told the stories of their own great deeds, of which we have heard already, but Ajax spoke roughly and discourteously, calling Odysseus a coward and a weakling.

"Perhaps the Trojans know," said Odysseus quietly, "whether they think that I deserve what Ajax has said about me, that I am a coward; and perhaps Ajax may remember that he did not find me so weak when we wrestled for a prize at the funeral of Patroclus."

Then the Trojans all with one voice said that Odysseus was the best man among the Greeks, and the most feared by them, both for his courage and his skill in stratagems of war. On this, the blood of Ajax flew into his face, and he stood silent and unmoving, and could not speak a word, till his friends came round him and led him away to his hut, and there he sat down and would not eat or drink, and the night fell.

Long he sat, musing in his mind, and then rose and put on all his armour, and seized a sword that Hector had given him one day when they two fought in a gentle passage of arms, and took courteous farewell of each other, and Ajax had given Hector a broad sword-belt, wrought with gold. This sword, Hector's gift, Ajax took, and went towards the hut of Odysseus, meaning to carve him limb from limb, for madness had come upon him in his great grief. Rushing through the night to slay Odysseus he fell upon the flock of sheep that the Greeks kept for their meat. And up and down among them he went, smiting blindly till the dawn came, and, lo! his senses returned to him, and he saw that he had not smitten Odysseus, but stood in a pool of blood among the sheep that he had slain. He could not endure the disgrace of his madness, and he fixed the sword, Hector's gift, with its hilt firmly in the ground, and went back a little way,

and ran and fell upon the sword, which pierced his heart, and so died the great Ajax, choosing death before a dishonoured life.

# Odysseus Sails to Seek the Son of Achilles

**WHEN THE GREEKS** found Ajax lying dead, slain by his own hand, they made great lament, and above all the brother of Ajax, and his wife Tecmessa bewailed him, and the shores of the sea rang with their sorrow.

But of all no man was more grieved than Odysseus, and he stood up and said: “Would that the sons of the Trojans had never awarded to me the arms of Achilles, for far rather would I have given them to Ajax than that this loss should have befallen the whole army of the Greeks. Let no man blame me, or be angry with me, for I have not sought for wealth, to enrich myself, but for honour only, and to win a name that will be remembered among men in times to come.”

Then they made a great fire of wood, and burned the body of Ajax, lamenting him as they had sorrowed for Achilles.

Now it seemed that though the Greeks had won the Luck of Troy and had defeated the Amazons and the army of Memnon, they were no nearer taking Troy than ever. They had slain Hector, indeed, and many other Trojans, but they had lost the great Achilles, and Ajax, and Patroclus, and Antilochus, with the princes whom Penthesilea and Memnon slew, and the bands of the dead chiefs were weary of fighting, and eager to go home. The chiefs met in council, and Menelaus arose and said that his heart was wasted with sorrow for the death of so many brave men who had sailed to Troy for his sake.

“Would that death had come upon me before I gathered this host,” he said, “but come, let the rest of us launch our swift ships, and return each to our own country.”

He spoke thus to try the Greeks, and see of what courage they were, for his desire was still to burn Troy town and to slay Paris with his own hand. Then up rose Diomede, and swore that never would the Greeks turn cowards. He bade them sharpen their swords, and make ready for battle. The prophet Calchas, too, arose and reminded the Greeks how he had always foretold that they would take Troy in the tenth year of the siege,

and how the tenth year had come, and victory was almost in their hands. Next Odysseus stood up and said that, though Achilles was dead, and there was no prince to lead his men, yet a son had been born to Achilles, while he was in the isle of Scyros, and that son he would bring to fill his father's place.

"Surely he will come, and for a token I will carry to him those unhappy arms of the great Achilles. Unworthy am I to wear them, and they bring back to my mind our sorrow for Ajax. But his son will wear them, in the front of the spearmen of Greece and in the thickest ranks of Troy shall the helmet of Achilles shine, as it was wont to do, for always he fought among the foremost."

Thus Odysseus spoke, and he and Diomede, with fifty oarsmen, went on board a swift ship, and sitting all in order on the benches they smote the grey sea into foam, and Odysseus held the helm and steered them towards the isle of Scyros.

Now the Trojans had rest from war for a while, and Priam, with a heavy heart, bade men take his chief treasure, the great golden vine, with leaves and clusters of gold, and carry it to the mother of Eurypylus, the king of the people who dwell where the wide marshlands of the river Caycus clang with the cries of the cranes and herons and wild swans. For the mother of Eurypylus had sworn that never would she let her son go to the war unless Priam sent her the vine of gold, a gift of the gods to an ancient King of Troy.

With a heavy heart, then, Priam sent the golden vine, but Eurypylus was glad when he saw it, and bade all his men arm, and harness the horses to the chariots, and glad were the Trojans when the long line of the new army wound along the road and into the town. Then Paris welcomed Eurypylus who was his nephew, son of his sister Astyoche, a daughter of Priam; but the grandfather of Eurypylus was the famous Heracles, the strongest man who ever lived on earth. So Paris brought Eurypylus to his house, where Helen sat working at her embroideries with her four bower maidens, and Eurypylus marvelled when he saw her, she was so beautiful. But the Khita, the people of Eurypylus, feasted in the open air among the Trojans, by the light of great fires burning, and to the music of pipes and flutes. The Greeks saw the fires, and heard the merry music, and they watched all night lest the Trojans should attack the ships before the dawn. But in the

dawn Eurypylus rose from sleep and put on his armour, and hung from his neck by the belt the great shield on which were fashioned, in gold of many colours and in silver, the Twelve Adventures of Heracles, his grandfather; strange deeds that he did, fighting with monsters and giants and with the Hound of Hades, who guards the dwellings of the dead. Then Eurypylus led on his whole army, and with the brothers of Hector he charged against the Greeks, who were led by Agamemnon.

In that battle Eurypylus first smote Nireus, who was the most beautiful of the Greeks now that Achilles had fallen. There lay Nireus, like an apple tree, all covered with blossoms red and white, that the wind has overthrown in a rich man's orchard. Then Eurypylus would have stripped off his armour, but Machaon rushed in, Machaon who had been wounded and taken to the tent of Nestor, on the day of the Valour of Hector, when he brought fire against the ships. Machaon drove his spear through the left shoulder of Eurypylus, but Eurypylus struck at his shoulder with his sword, and the blood flowed; nevertheless, Machaon stooped, and grasped a great stone, and sent it against the helmet of Eurypylus. He was shaken, but he did not fall, he drove his spear through breastplate and breast of Machaon, who fell and died.

With his last breath he said, "Thou, too, shalt fall," but Eurypylus made answer, "So let it be! Men cannot live for ever, and such is the fortune of war."

Thus the battle rang, and shone, and shifted, till few of the Greeks kept steadfast, except those with Menelaus and Agamemnon, for Diomede and Odysseus were far away upon the sea, bringing from Scyros the son of Achilles. But Teucer slew Polydamas, who had warned Hector to come within the walls of Troy; and Menelaus wounded Deiphobus, the bravest of the sons of Priam who were still in arms, for many had fallen; and Agamemnon slew certain spearmen of the Trojans. Round Eurypylus fought Paris, and Aeneas, who wounded Teucer with a great stone, breaking in his helmet, but he drove back in his chariot to the ships. Menelaus and Agamemnon stood alone and fought in the crowd of Trojans, like two wild boars that a circle of hunters surrounds with spears, so fiercely they stood at bay. There they would both have fallen, but Idomeneus, and Meriones of Crete, and Thrasymedes, Nestor's son, ran to their rescue, and fiercer grew the fighting. Eurypylus desired to slay

Agamemnon and Menelaus, and end the war, but, as the spears of the Scots encompassed King James at Flodden Field till he ran forward, and fell within a lance's length of the English general, so the men of Crete and Pylos guarded the two princes with their spears.

There Paris was wounded in the thigh with a spear, and he retreated a little way, and showered his arrows among the Greeks; and Idomeneus lifted and hurled a great stone at Eurypylus which struck his spear out of his hand, and he went back to find it, and Menelaus and Agamemnon had a breathing space in the battle. But soon Eurypylus returned, crying on his men, and they drove back foot by foot the ring of spears round Agamemnon, and Aeneas and Paris slew men of Crete and of Mycenae till the Greeks were pushed to the ditch round the camp; and then great stones and spears and arrows rained down on the Trojans and the people of Eurypylus from the battlements and towers of the Grecian wall. Now night fell, and Eurypylus knew that he could not win the wall in the dark, so he withdrew his men, and they built great fires, and camped upon the plain.

The case of the Greeks was now like that of the Trojans after the death of Hector. They buried Machaon and the other chiefs who had fallen, and they remained within their ditch and their wall, for they dared not come out into the open plain. They knew not whether Odysseus and Diomede had come safely to Scyros, or whether their ship had been wrecked or driven into unknown seas. So they sent a herald to Eurypylus, asking for a truce, that they might gather their dead and burn them, and the Trojans and Khita also buried their dead.

Meanwhile the swift ship of Odysseus had swept through the sea to Scyros, and to the palace of King Lycomedes. There they found Neoptolemus, the son of Achilles, in the court before the doors. He was as tall as his father, and very like him in face and shape, and he was practising the throwing of the spear at a mark. Right glad were Odysseus and Diomede to behold him, and Odysseus told Neoptolemus who they were, and why they came, and implored him to take pity on the Greeks and help them.

"My friend is Diomede, Prince of Argos," said Odysseus, "and I am Odysseus of Ithaca. Come with us, and we Greeks will give you countless gifts, and I myself will present you with the armour of your father, such as it is not lawful for any other mortal man to wear, seeing that it is golden,

and wrought by the hands of a God. Moreover, when we have taken Troy, and gone home, Menelaus will give you his daughter, the beautiful Hermione, to be your wife, with gold in great plenty."

Then Neoptolemus answered: "It is enough that the Greeks need my sword. Tomorrow we shall sail for Troy."

He led them into the palace to dine, and there they found his mother, beautiful Deidamia, in mourning raiment, and she wept when she heard that they had come to take her son away. But Neoptolemus comforted her, promising to return safely with the spoils of Troy, "or, even if I fall," he said, "it will be after doing deeds worthy of my father's name."

So next day they sailed, leaving Deidamia mournful, like a swallow whose nest a serpent has found, and has killed her young ones; even so she wailed, and went up and down in the house. But the ship ran swiftly on her way, cleaving the dark waves till Odysseus showed Neoptolemus the far off snowy crest of Mount Ida; and Tenedos, the island near Troy; and they passed the plain where the tomb of Achilles stands, but Odysseus did not tell the son that it was his father's tomb.

Now all this time the Greeks, shut up within their wall and fighting from their towers, were looking back across the sea, eager to spy the ship of Odysseus, like men wrecked on a desert island, who keep watch every day for a sail afar off, hoping that the seamen will touch at their isle and have pity upon them, and carry them home, so the Greeks kept watch for the ship bearing Neoptolemus.

Diomede, too, had been watching the shore, and when they came in sight of the ships of the Greeks, he saw that they were being besieged by the Trojans, and that all the Greek army was penned up within the wall, and was fighting from the towers.

Then he cried aloud to Odysseus and Neoptolemus, "Make haste, friends, let us arm before we land, for some great evil has fallen upon the Greeks. The Trojans are attacking our wall, and soon they will burn our ships, and for us there will be no return."

Then all the men on the ship of Odysseus armed themselves, and Neoptolemus, in the splendid armour of his father, was the first to leap ashore. The Greeks could not come from the wall to welcome him, for they were fighting hard and hand-to-hand with Eurypylus and his men. But they glanced back over their shoulders and it seemed to them that they saw

Achilles himself, spear and sword in hand, rushing to help them. They raised a great battle-cry, and, when Neoptolemus reached the battlements, he and Odysseus, and Diomede leaped down to the plain, the Greeks following them, and they all charged at once on the men of Eurypylus, with levelled spears, and drove them from the wall.

Then the Trojans trembled, for they knew the shields of Diomede and Odysseus, and they thought that the tall chief in the armour of Achilles was Achilles himself, come back from the land of the dead to take vengeance for Antilochus. The Trojans fled, and gathered round Eurypylus, as in a thunderstorm little children, afraid of the lightning and the noise, run and cluster round their father, and hide their faces on his knees.

But Neoptolemus was spearing the Trojans, as a man who carries at night a beacon of fire in his boat on the sea spears the fishes that flock around, drawn by the blaze of the flame. Cruelly he avenged his father's death on many a Trojan, and the men whom Achilles had led followed Achilles' son, slaying to right and left, and smiting the Trojans, as they ran, between the shoulders with the spear. Thus they fought and followed while daylight lasted, but when night fell, they led Neoptolemus to his father's hut, where the women washed him in the bath, and then he was taken to feast with Agamemnon and Menelaus and the princes. They all welcomed him, and gave him glorious gifts, swords with silver hilts, and cups of gold and silver, and they were glad, for they had driven the Trojans from their wall, and hoped that tomorrow they would slay Eurypylus, and take Troy town.

But their hope was not to be fulfilled, for though next day Eurypylus met Neoptolemus in the battle, and was slain by him, when the Greeks chased the Trojans into their city so great a storm of lightning and thunder and rain fell upon them that they retreated again to their camp. They believed that Zeus, the chief of the Gods, was angry with them, and the days went by, and Troy still stood unconquered.

# The Slaying of Paris

**WHEN THE GREEKS** were disheartened, as they often were, they consulted Calchas the prophet. He usually found that they must do something, or send for somebody, and in doing so they diverted their minds from their many misfortunes. Now, as the Trojans were fighting more bravely than before, under Deiphobus, a brother of Hector, the Greeks went to Calchas for advice, and he told them that they must send Odysseus and Diomede to bring Philoctetes the bowman from the isle of Lemnos. This was an unhappy deserted island, in which the married women, some years before, had murdered all their husbands, out of jealousy, in a single night. The Greeks had landed in Lemnos, on their way to Troy, and there Philoctetes had shot an arrow at a great water dragon which lived in a well within a cave in the lonely hills. But when he entered the cave the dragon bit him, and, though he killed it at last, its poisonous teeth wounded his foot. The wound never healed, but dripped with venom, and Philoctetes, in terrible pain, kept all the camp awake at night by his cries.

The Greeks were sorry for him, but he was not a pleasant companion, shrieking as he did, and exuding poison wherever he came. So they left him on the lonely island, and did not know whether he was alive or dead. Calchas ought to have told the Greeks not to desert Philoctetes at the time, if he was so important that Troy, as the prophet now said, could not be taken without him. But now, as he must give some advice, Calchas said that Philoctetes must be brought back, so Odysseus and Diomede went to bring him. They sailed to Lemnos, a melancholy place they found it, with no smoke rising from the ruinous houses along the shore. As they were landing they learned that Philoctetes was not dead, for his dismal old cries of pain, came echoing from a cave on the beach. To this cave the princes went, and found a terrible-looking man, with long, dirty, dry hair and beard; he was worn to a skeleton, with hollow eyes, and lay moaning in a mass of the feathers of sea birds. His great bow and his arrows lay ready to his hand: with these he used to shoot the sea birds, which were all that he

had to eat, and their feathers littered all the floor of his cave, and they were none the better for the poison that dripped from his wounded foot.

When this horrible creature saw Odysseus and Diomede coming near, he seized his bow and fitted a poisonous arrow to the string, for he hated the Greeks, because they had left him in the desert isle. But the princes held up their hands in sign of peace, and cried out that they had come to do him kindness, so he laid down his bow, and they came in and sat on the rocks, and promised that his wound should be healed, for the Greeks were very much ashamed of having deserted him. It was difficult to resist Odysseus when he wished to persuade any one, and at last Philoctetes consented to sail with them to Troy. The oarsmen carried him down to the ship on a litter, and there his dreadful wound was washed with warm water, and oil was poured into it, and it was bound up with soft linen, so that his pain grew less fierce, and they gave him a good supper and wine enough, which he had not tasted for many years.

Next morning they sailed, and had a fair west wind, so that they soon landed among the Greeks and carried Philoctetes on shore. Here Podaleirius, the brother of Machaon, being a physician, did all that could be done to heal the wound, and the pain left Philoctetes. He was taken to the hut of Agamemnon, who welcomed him, and said that the Greeks repented of their cruelty. They gave him seven female slaves to take care of him, and twenty swift horses, and twelve great vessels of bronze, and told him that he was always to live with the greatest chiefs and feed at their table. So he was bathed, and his hair was cut and combed and anointed with oil, and soon he was eager and ready to fight, and to use his great bow and poisoned arrows on the Trojans. The use of poisoned arrow-tips was thought unfair, but Philoctetes had no scruples.

Now in the next battle Paris was shooting down the Greeks with his arrows, when Philoctetes saw him, and cried: “Dog, you are proud of your archery and of the arrow that slew the great Achilles. But, behold, I am a better bowman than you, by far, and the bow in my hands was borne by the strong man Heracles!”

So he cried and drew the bowstring to his breast and the poisoned arrowhead to the bow, and the bowstring rang, and the arrow flew, and did but graze the hand of Paris. Then the bitter pain of the poison came upon him, and the Trojans carried him into their city, where the physicians

tended him all night. But he never slept, and lay tossing in agony till dawn, when he said: “There is but one hope. Take me to Oenone, the nymph of Mount Ida!”

Then his friends laid Paris on a litter, and bore him up the steep path to Mount Ida. Often had he climbed it swiftly, when he was young, and went to see the nymph who loved him; but for many a day he had not trod the path where he was now carried in great pain and fear, for the poison turned his blood to fire. Little hope he had, for he knew how cruelly he had deserted Oenone, and he saw that all the birds which were disturbed in the wood flew away to the left hand, an omen of evil.

At last the bearers reached the cave where the nymph Oenone lived, and they smelled the sweet fragrance of the cedar fire that burned on the floor of the cave, and they heard the nymph singing a melancholy song.

Then Paris called to her in the voice which she had once loved to hear, and she grew very pale, and rose up, saying to herself, “The day has come for which I have prayed. He is sore hurt, and has come to bid me heal his wound.”

So she came and stood in the doorway of the dark cave, white against the darkness, and the bearers laid Paris on the litter at the feet of Oenone, and he stretched forth his hands to touch her knees, as was the manner of suppliants. But she drew back and gathered her robe about her, that he might not touch it with his hands.

Then he said: “Lady, despise me not, and hate me not, for my pain is more than I can bear. Truly it was by no will of mine that I left you lonely here, for the Fates that no man may escape led me to Helen. Would that I had died in your arms before I saw her face! But now I beseech you in the name of the Gods, and for the memory of our love, that you will have pity on me and heal my hurt, and not refuse your grace and let me die here at your feet.”

Then Oenone answered scornfully: “Why have you come here to me? Surely for years you have not come this way, where the path was once worn with your feet. But long ago you left me lonely and lamenting, for the love of Helen of the fair hands. Surely she is much more beautiful than the love of your youth, and far more able to help you, for men say that she can never know old age and death. Go home to Helen and let her take away your pain.”

Thus Oenone spoke, and went within the cave, where she threw herself down among the ashes of the hearth and sobbed for anger and sorrow. In a little while she rose and went to the door of the cave, thinking that Paris had not been borne away back to Troy, but she found him not; for his bearers had carried him by another path, till he died beneath the boughs of the oak trees. Then his bearers carried him swiftly down to Troy, where his mother bewailed him, and Helen sang over him as she had sung over Hector, remembering many things, and fearing to think of what her own end might be. But the Trojans hastily built a great pile of dry wood, and thereon laid the body of Paris and set fire to it, and the flame went up through the darkness, for now night had fallen.

But Oenone was roaming in the dark woods, crying and calling after Paris, like a lioness whose cubs the hunters have carried away. The moon rose to give her light, and the flame of the funeral fire shone against the sky, and then Oenone knew that Paris had died – beautiful Paris – and that the Trojans were burning his body on the plain at the foot of Mount Ida.

Then she cried that now Paris was all her own, and that Helen had no more hold on him: “And though when he was living he left me, in death we shall not be divided,” she said, and she sped down the hill, and through the thickets where the wood nymphs were wailing for Paris, and she reached the plain, and, covering her head with her veil like a bride, she rushed through the throng of Trojans. She leaped upon the burning pile of wood, she clasped the body of Paris in her arms, and the flame of fire consumed the bridegroom and the bride, and their ashes mingled. No man could divide them any more, and the ashes were placed in a golden cup, within a chamber of stone, and the earth was mounded above them. On that grave the wood nymphs planted two rose trees, and their branches met and plaited together.

This was the end of Paris and Oenone.

# How Odysseus Invented the Wooden Horse

**AFTER PARIS DIED**, Helen was not given back to Menelaus. We are often told that only fear of the anger of Paris had prevented the Trojans from surrendering Helen and making peace. Now Paris could not terrify them, yet for all that the men of the town would not part with Helen, whether because she was so beautiful, or because they thought it dishonourable to yield her to the Greeks, who might put her to a cruel death. So Helen was taken by Deiphobus, the brother of Paris, to live in his own house, and Deiphobus was at this time the best warrior and the chief captain of the men of Troy.

Meanwhile, the Greeks made an assault against the Trojan walls and fought long and hardily; but, being safe behind the battlements, and shooting through loopholes, the Trojans drove them back with loss of many of their men. It was in vain that Philoctetes shot his poisoned arrows, they fell back from the stone walls, or stuck in the palisades of wood above the walls, and the Greeks who tried to climb over were speared, or crushed with heavy stones. When night fell, they retreated to the ships and held a council, and, as usual, they asked the advice of the prophet Calchas. It was the business of Calchas to go about looking at birds, and taking omens from what he saw them doing, a way of prophesying which the Romans also used, and some savages do the same to this day. Calchas said that yesterday he had seen a hawk pursuing a dove, which hid herself in a hole in a rocky cliff. For a long while the hawk tried to find the hole, and follow the dove into it, but he could not reach her. So he flew away for a short distance and hid himself; then the dove fluttered out into the sunlight, and the hawk swooped on her and killed her.

“The Greeks,” said Calchas, “ought to learn a lesson from the hawk, and take Troy by cunning, as by force they could do nothing.”

Then Odysseus stood up and described a trick which it is not easy to understand.

“The Greeks,” he said, ought to make an enormous hollow horse of wood, and place the bravest men in the horse. Then all the rest of the Greeks should embark in their ships and sail to the Isle of Tenedos, and lie hidden behind the island. The Trojans would then come out of the city, like the dove out of her hole in the rock, and would wander about the Greek camp, and wonder why the great horse of tree had been made, and why it had been left behind. Lest they should set fire to the horse, when they would soon have found out the warriors hidden in it, a cunning Greek, whom the Trojans did not know by sight, should be left in the camp or near it. He would tell the Trojans that the Greeks had given up all hope and gone home, and he was to say that they feared the Goddess Pallas was angry with them, because they had stolen her image that fell from heaven, and was called the Luck of Troy. To soothe Pallas and prevent her from sending great storms against the ships, the Greeks (so the man was to say) had built this wooden horse as an offering to the Goddess. The Trojans, believing this story, would drag the horse into Troy, and, in the night, the princes would come out, set fire to the city, and open the gates to the army, which would return from Tenedos as soon as darkness came on.”

The prophet was much pleased with the plan of Odysseus, and, as two birds happened to fly away on the right hand, he declared that the stratagem would certainly be lucky. Neoptolemus, on the other hand, voted for taking Troy, without any trick, by sheer hard fighting. Odysseus replied that if Achilles could not do that, it could not be done at all, and that Epeius, a famous carpenter, had better set about making the horse at once.

Next day half the army, with axes in their hands, were sent to cut down trees on Mount Ida, and thousands of planks were cut from the trees by Epeius and his workmen, and in three days he had finished the horse. Odysseus then asked the best of the Greeks to come forward and go inside the machine; while one, whom the Greeks did not know by sight, should volunteer to stay behind in the camp and deceive the Trojans. Then a young man called Sinon stood up and said that he would risk himself and take the chance that the Trojans might disbelieve him, and burn him alive. Certainly, none of the Greeks did anything more courageous, yet Sinon had not been considered brave. Had he fought in the front ranks, the Trojans would have known him; but there were many brave fighters who would not have dared to do what Sinon undertook.

Then old Nestor was the first that volunteered to go into the horse; but Neoptolemus said that, brave as he was, he was too old, and that he must depart with the army to Tenedos. Neoptolemus himself would go into the horse, for he would rather die than turn his back on Troy. So Neoptolemus armed himself and climbed into the horse, as did Menelaus, Odysseus, Diomede, Thrasymedes (Nestor's son), Idomeneus, Philoctetes, Meriones, and all the best men except Agamemnon, while Epeius himself entered last of all. Agamemnon was not allowed by the other Greeks to share their adventure, as he was to command the army when they returned from Tenedos. They meanwhile launched their ships and sailed away.

But first Menelaus had led Odysseus apart, and told him that if they took Troy (and now they must either take it or die at the hands of the Trojans), he would owe to Odysseus the glory. When they came back to Greece, he wished to give Odysseus one of his own cities, that they might always be near each other. Odysseus smiled and shook his head; he could not leave Ithaca, his own rough island kingdom.

"But if we both live through the night that is coming," he said, "I may ask you for one gift, and giving it will make you none the poorer."

Then Menelaus swore by the splendour of Zeus that Odysseus could ask him for no gift that he would not gladly give; so they embraced, and both armed themselves and went up into the horse. With them were all the chiefs except Nestor, whom they would not allow to come, and Agamemnon, who, as chief general, had to command the army. They swathed themselves and their arms in soft silks, that they might not ring and clash, when the Trojans, if they were so foolish, dragged the horse up into their town, and there they sat in the dark waiting. Meanwhile, the army burned their huts and launched their ships, and with oars and sails made their way to the back of the isle of Tenedos.

# The End of Troy and the Saving of Helen

**FROM THE WALLS** the Trojans saw the black smoke go up thick into the sky, and the whole fleet of the Greeks sailing out to sea. Never were men so glad, and they armed themselves for fear of an ambush, and went cautiously, sending forth scouts in front of them, down to the seashore. Here they found the huts burned down and the camp deserted, and some of the scouts also caught Sinon, who had hid himself in a place where he was likely to be found. They rushed on him with fierce cries, and bound his hands with a rope, and kicked and dragged him along to the place where Priam and the princes were wondering at the great horse of tree. Sinon looked round upon them, while some were saying that he ought to be tortured with fire to make him tell all the truth about the horse. The chiefs in the horse must have trembled for fear lest torture should wring the truth out of Sinon, for then the Trojans would simply burn the machine and them within it.

But Sinon said: “Miserable man that I am, whom the Greeks hate and the Trojans are eager to slay!”

When the Trojans heard that the Greeks hated him, they were curious, and asked who he was, and how he came to be there.

“I will tell you all, oh King!” he answered Priam. “I was a friend and squire of an unhappy chief, Palamedes, whom the wicked Odysseus hated and slew secretly one day, when he found him alone, fishing in the sea. I was angry, and in my folly I did not hide my anger, and my words came to the ears of Odysseus. From that hour he sought occasion to slay me. Then Calchas –” here he stopped, saying: “But why tell a long tale? If you hate all Greeks alike, then slay me; this is what Agamemnon and Odysseus desire; Menelaus would thank you for my head.”

The Trojans were now more curious than before. They bade him go on, and he said that the Greeks had consulted an Oracle, which advised them to sacrifice one of their army to appease the anger of the Gods and gain a fair wind homewards.

“‘But who was to be sacrificed?’ they asked Calchas, who for fifteen days refused to speak. At last, being bribed by Odysseus, he pointed to me, Sinon, and said that I must be the victim. I was bound and kept in prison, while they built their great horse as a present for Pallas-Athene the Goddess. They made it so large that you Trojans might never be able to drag it into your city; while, if you destroyed it, the Goddess might turn her anger against you. And now they have gone home to bring back the image that fell from heaven, which they had sent to Greece, and to restore it to the Temple of Pallas-Athene, when they have taken your town, for the Goddess is angry with them for that theft of Odysseus.”

The Trojans were foolish enough to believe the story of Sinon, and they pitied him and unbound his hands. Then they tied ropes to the wooden horse, and laid rollers in front of it, like men launching a ship, and they all took turns to drag the horse up to the Scaean gate. Children and women put their hands to the ropes and hauled, and with shouts and dances, and hymns they toiled, till about nightfall the horse stood in the courtyard of the inmost castle.

Then all the people of Troy began to dance, and drink, and sing. Such sentinels as were set at the gates got as drunk as all the rest, who danced about the city till after midnight, and then they went to their homes and slept heavily.

Meanwhile the Greek ships were returning from behind Tenedos as fast as the oarsmen could row them.

One Trojan did not drink or sleep; this was Deiphobus, at whose house Helen was now living. He bade her come with them, for he knew that she was able to speak in the very voice of all men and women whom she had ever seen, and he armed a few of his friends and went with them to the citadel. Then he stood beside the horse, holding Helen’s hand, and whispered to her that she must call each of the chiefs in the voice of his wife. She was obliged to obey, and she called Menelaus in her own voice, and Diomede in the voice of his wife, and Odysseus in the very voice of Penelope. Then Menelaus and Diomede were eager to answer, but Odysseus grasped their hands and whispered the word “Echo!” Then they remembered that this was a name of Helen, because she could speak in all voices, and they were silent; but Anticlus was still eager to answer, till Odysseus held his strong hand over his mouth. There was only silence, and

Deiphobus led Helen back to his house. When they had gone away Epeius opened the side of the horse, and all the chiefs let themselves down softly to the ground. Some rushed to the gate, to open it, and they killed the sleeping sentinels and let in the Greeks. Others sped with torches to burn the houses of the Trojan princes, and terrible was the slaughter of men, unarmed and half awake, and loud were the cries of the women. But Odysseus had slipped away at the first, none knew where. Neoptolemus ran to the palace of Priam, who was sitting at the altar in his courtyard, praying vainly to the Gods, for Neoptolemus slew the old man cruelly, and his white hair was dabbled in his blood. All through the city was fighting and slaying; but Menelaus went to the house of Deiphobus, knowing that Helen was there.

In the doorway he found Deiphobus lying dead in all his armour, a spear standing in his breast. There were footprints marked in blood, leading through the portico and into the hall. There Menelaus went, and found Odysseus leaning, wounded, against one of the central pillars of the great chamber, the firelight shining on his armour.

“Why hast thou slain Deiphobus and robbed me of my revenge?” said Menelaus.

“You swore to give me a gift,” said Odysseus, “and will you keep your oath?”

“Ask what you will,” said Menelaus; “it is yours and my oath cannot be broken.”

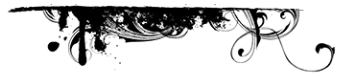
“I ask the life of Helen of the fair hands,” said Odysseus; “this is my own life-price that I pay back to her, for she saved my life when I took the Luck of Troy, and I swore that hers should be saved.”

Then Helen stole, glimmering in white robes, from a recess in the dark hall, and fell at the feet of Menelaus; her golden hair lay in the dust of the hearth, and her hands moved to touch his knees. His drawn sword fell from the hands of Menelaus, and pity and love came into his heart, and he raised her from the dust and her white arms were round his neck, and they both wept. That night Menelaus fought no more, but they tended the wound of Odysseus, for the sword of Deiphobus had bitten through his helmet.

When dawn came Troy lay in ashes, and the women were being driven with spear shafts to the ships, and the men were left unburied, a prey to dogs and all manner of birds. Thus the grey city fell, that had lorded it for

many centuries. All the gold and silver and rich embroideries, and ivory and amber, the horses and chariots, were divided among the army; all but a treasure of silver and gold, hidden in a chest within a hollow of the wall, and this treasure was found, not very many years ago, by men digging deep on the hill where Troy once stood. The women, too, were given to the princes, and Neoptolemus took Andromache to his home in Argos, to draw water from the well and to be the slave of a master, and Agamemnon carried beautiful Cassandra, the daughter of Priam, to his palace in Mycenae, where they were both slain in one night. Only Helen was led with honour to the ship of Menelaus.

# HOMER'S THE ODYSSEY



## Introduction

***THE ODYSSEY*** is the second ancient Greek epic poem composed by Homer. It can be viewed as the sequel to Homer's *The Iliad* and is thought to originate from the eighth century bc. The epic poem follows Odysseus as he attempts to return home after the Trojan War; a journey which takes ten years as he faces all manner of dangers in the form of storms, sea monsters and interference from the gods. Awaiting his return is his wife Penelope who alongside her son is maintaining Odysseus' kingdom whilst battling against numerous men attempting to convince her of marriage in order to claim the kingdom for their own. *The Odyssey* is the story of an epic adventure home and remains hugely influential in Western literature.

In the following chapter we have split the tale into three sections, which we have called: 'The Telemachia' (Books 1–4), which concern themselves mostly with Odysseus' son Telemachus; 'The Wanderings' (Books 5–12), in which Odysseus recounts his many adventures at sea; and 'The Return to Ithaca' (Books 13–24) where Odysseus faces Penelope's suitors and the challenge to take back his throne.

# The Telemachia

## Book 1

**TELL ME, O MUSE**, of that ingenious hero who travelled far and wide after he had sacked the famous town of Troy. Many cities did he visit, and many were the nations with whose manners and customs he was acquainted; moreover he suffered much by sea while trying to save his own life and bring his men safely home; but do what he might he could not save his men, for they perished through their own sheer folly in eating the cattle of the Sun-god Hyperion; so the god prevented them from ever reaching home. Tell me, too, about all these things, oh daughter of Zeus, from whatsoever source you may know them.

So now all who escaped death in battle or by shipwreck had got safely home except Odysseus, and he, though he was longing to return to his wife and country, was detained by the goddess Calypso, who had got him into a large cave and wanted to marry him. But as years went by, there came a time when the gods settled that he should go back to Ithaca; even then, however, when he was among his own people, his troubles were not yet over; nevertheless all the gods had now begun to pity him except Poseidon, who still persecuted him without ceasing and would not let him get home.

Now Poseidon had gone off to the Ethiopians, who are at the world's end, and lie in two halves, the one looking West and the other East. He had gone there to accept a hecatomb of sheep and oxen, and was enjoying himself at his festival; but the other gods met in the house of Olympian Zeus, and the sire of gods and men spoke first. At that moment he was thinking of Aegisthus, who had been killed by Agamemnon's son Orestes; so he said to the other gods:

"See now, how men lay blame upon us gods for what is after all nothing but their own folly. Look at Aegisthus; he must needs make love to Agamemnon's wife unrighteously and then kill Agamemnon, though he knew it would be the death of him; for I sent Hermes to warn him not to do either of these things, inasmuch as Orestes would be sure to take his

revenge when he grew up and wanted to return home. Hermes told him this in all good will but he would not listen, and now he has paid for everything in full."

Then Athene said, "Father, son of Cronus, King of kings, it served Aegisthus right, and so it would any one else who does as he did; but Aegisthus is neither here nor there; it is for Odysseus that my heart bleeds, when I think of his sufferings in that lonely sea-girt island, far away, poor man, from all his friends. It is an island covered with forest, in the very middle of the sea, and a goddess lives there, daughter of the magician Atlas, who looks after the bottom of the ocean, and carries the great columns that keep heaven and earth asunder. This daughter of Atlas has got hold of poor unhappy Odysseus, and keeps trying by every kind of blandishment to make him forget his home, so that he is tired of life, and thinks of nothing but how he may once more see the smoke of his own chimneys. You, sir, take no heed of this, and yet when Odysseus was before Troy did he not propitiate you with many a burnt sacrifice? Why then should you keep on being so angry with him?"

And Zeus said, "My child, what are you talking about? How can I forget Odysseus than whom there is no more capable man on earth, nor more liberal in his offerings to the immortal gods that live in heaven? Bear in mind, however, that Poseidon is still furious with Odysseus for having blinded an eye of Polyphemus king of the Cyclopes. Polyphemus is son to Poseidon by the nymph Thoosa, daughter to the sea-king Phorcys; therefore though he will not kill Odysseus outright, he torments him by preventing him from getting home. Still, let us lay our heads together and see how we can help him to return; Poseidon will then be pacified, for if we are all of a mind he can hardly stand out against us."

And Athene said, "Father, son of Cronus, King of kings, if, then, the gods now mean that Odysseus should get home, we should first send Hermes to the Ogygian island to tell Calypso that we have made up our minds and that he is to return. In the meantime I will go to Ithaca, to put heart into Odysseus' son Telemachus; I will embolden him to call the Achaeans in assembly, and speak out to the suitors of his mother Penelope, who persist in eating up any number of his sheep and oxen; I will also conduct him to Sparta and to Pylos, to see if he can hear anything about the return of his dear father – for this will make people speak well of him."

So saying she bound on her glittering golden sandals, imperishable, with which she can fly like the wind over land or sea; she grasped the redoubtable bronze-shod spear, so stout and sturdy and strong, wherewith she quells the ranks of heroes who have displeased her, and down she darted from the topmost summits of Olympus, whereon forthwith she was in Ithaca, at the gateway of Odysseus' house, disguised as a visitor, Mentes, chief of the Taphians, and she held a bronze spear in her hand. There she found the lordly suitors seated on hides of the oxen which they had killed and eaten, and playing draughts in front of the house. Men-servants and pages were bustling about to wait upon them, some mixing wine with water in the mixing-bowls, some cleaning down the tables with wet sponges and laying them out again, and some cutting up great quantities of meat.

Telemachus saw her long before any one else did. He was sitting moodily among the suitors thinking about his brave father, and how he would send them flying out of the house, if he were to come to his own again and be honoured as in days gone by. Thus brooding as he sat among them, he caught sight of Athene and went straight to the gate, for he was vexed that a stranger should be kept waiting for admittance. He took her right hand in his own, and bade her give him her spear. "Welcome," said he, "to our house, and when you have partaken of food you shall tell us what you have come for."

He led the way as he spoke, and Athene followed him. When they were within he took her spear and set it in the spear-stand against a strong bearing-post along with the many other spears of his unhappy father, and he conducted her to a richly decorated seat under which he threw a cloth of damask. There was a footstool also for her feet, and he set another seat near her for himself, away from the suitors, that she might not be annoyed while eating by their noise and insolence, and that he might ask her more freely about his father.

A maid servant then brought them water in a beautiful golden ewer and poured it into a silver basin for them to wash their hands, and she drew a clean table beside them. An upper servant brought them bread, and offered them many good things of what there was in the house, the carver fetched them plates of all manner of meats and set cups of gold by their side, and a manservant brought them wine and poured it out for them.

Then the suitors came in and took their places on the benches and seats. Forthwith men servants poured water over their hands, maids went round with the bread-baskets, pages filled the mixing-bowls with wine and water, and they laid their hands upon the good things that were before them. As soon as they had had enough to eat and drink they wanted music and dancing, which are the crowning embellishments of a banquet, so a servant brought a lyre to Phemius, whom they compelled perforce to sing to them. As soon as he touched his lyre and began to sing Telemachus spoke low to Athene, with his head close to hers that no man might hear.

"I hope, sir," said he, "that you will not be offended with what I am going to say. Singing comes cheap to those who do not pay for it, and all this is done at the cost of one whose bones lie rotting in some wilderness or grinding to powder in the surf. If these men were to see my father come back to Ithaca they would pray for longer legs rather than a longer purse, for money would not serve them; but he, alas, has fallen on an ill fate, and even when people do sometimes say that he is coming, we no longer heed them; we shall never see him again. And now, sir, tell me and tell me true, who you are and where you come from. Tell me of your town and parents, what manner of ship you came in, how your crew brought you to Ithaca, and of what nation they declared themselves to be – for you cannot have come by land. Tell me also truly, for I want to know, are you a stranger to this house, or have you been here in my father's time? In the old days we had many visitors for my father went about much himself."

And Athene answered, "I will tell you truly and particularly all about it. I am Mentes, son of Anchialus, and I am King of the Taphians. I have come here with my ship and crew, on a voyage to men of a foreign tongue being bound for Temesa with a cargo of iron, and I shall bring back copper. As for my ship, it lies over yonder off the open country away from the town, in the harbour Rheithron under the wooded mountain Neritum. Our fathers were friends before us, as old Laertes will tell you, if you will go and ask him. They say, however, that he never comes to town now, and lives by himself in the country, faring hardly, with an old woman to look after him and get his dinner for him, when he comes in tired from pottering about his vineyard. They told me your father was at home again, and that was why I came, but it seems the gods are still keeping him back, for he is not dead yet not on the mainland. It is more likely he is on some sea-girt

island in mid ocean, or a prisoner among savages who are detaining him against his will. I am no prophet, and know very little about omens, but I speak as it is borne in upon me from heaven, and assure you that he will not be away much longer; for he is a man of such resource that even though he were in chains of iron he would find some means of getting home again. But tell me, and tell me true, can Odysseus really have such a fine looking fellow for a son? You are indeed wonderfully like him about the head and eyes, for we were close friends before he set sail for Troy where the flower of all the Argives went also. Since that time we have never either of us seen the other."

"My mother," answered Telemachus, "tells me I am son to Odysseus, but it is a wise child that knows his own father. Would that I were son to one who had grown old upon his own estates, for, since you ask me, there is no more ill-starred man under heaven than he who they tell me is my father."

And Athene said, "There is no fear of your race dying out yet, while Penelope has such a fine son as you are. But tell me, and tell me true, what is the meaning of all this feasting, and who are these people? What is it all about? Have you some banquet, or is there a wedding in the family – for no one seems to be bringing any provisions of his own? And the guests – how atrociously they are behaving; what riot they make over the whole house; it is enough to disgust any respectable person who comes near them."

"Sir," said Telemachus, "as regards your question, so long as my father was here it was well with us and with the house, but the gods in their displeasure have willed it otherwise, and have hidden him away more closely than mortal man was ever yet hidden. I could have borne it better even though he were dead, if he had fallen with his men before Troy, or had died with friends around him when the days of his fighting were done; for then the Achaeans would have built a mound over his ashes, and I should myself have been heir to his renown; but now the storm-winds have spirited him away we know not whither; he is gone without leaving so much as a trace behind him, and I inherit nothing but dismay. Nor does the matter end simply with grief for the loss of my father; heaven has laid sorrows upon me of yet another kind; for the chiefs from all our islands, Dulichium, Same, and the woodland island of Zacynthus, as also all the principal men of Ithaca itself, are eating up my house under the pretext of

paying their court to my mother, who will neither point blank say that she will not marry, nor yet bring matters to an end; so they are making havoc of my estate, and before long will do so also with myself."

"Is that so?" exclaimed Athene, "then you do indeed want Odysseus home again. Give him his helmet, shield, and a couple of lances, and if he is the man he was when I first knew him in our house, drinking and making merry, he would soon lay his hands about these rascally suitors, were he to stand once more upon his own threshold. He was then coming from Ephyra, where he had been to beg poison for his arrows from Ilus, son of Mermerus. Ilus feared the ever-living gods and would not give him any, but my father let him have some, for he was very fond of him. If Odysseus is the man he then was these suitors will have a short shrift and a sorry wedding.

"But there! It rests with heaven to determine whether he is to return, and take his revenge in his own house or no; I would, however, urge you to set about trying to get rid of these suitors at once. Take my advice, call the Achaean heroes in assembly tomorrow morning – lay your case before them, and call heaven to bear you witness. Bid the suitors take themselves off, each to his own place, and if your mother's mind is set on marrying again, let her go back to her father, who will find her a husband and provide her with all the marriage gifts that so dear a daughter may expect. As for yourself, let me prevail upon you to take the best ship you can get, with a crew of twenty men, and go in quest of your father who has so long been missing. Some one may tell you something, or (and people often hear things in this way) some heaven-sent message may direct you. First go to Pylos and ask Nestor; thence go on to Sparta and visit Menelaus, for he got home last of all the Achaeans; if you hear that your father is alive and on his way home, you can put up with the waste these suitors will make for yet another twelve months. If on the other hand you hear of his death, come home at once, celebrate his funeral rites with all due pomp, build a barrow to his memory, and make your mother marry again. Then, having done all this, think it well over in your mind how, by fair means or foul, you may kill these suitors in your own house. You are too old to plead infancy any longer; have you not heard how people are singing Orestes' praises for having killed his father's murderer Aegisthus? You are a fine, smart looking fellow; show your mettle, then, and make yourself a name

in story. Now, however, I must go back to my ship and to my crew, who will be impatient if I keep them waiting longer; think the matter over for yourself, and remember what I have said to you."

"Sir," answered Telemachus, "it has been very kind of you to talk to me in this way, as though I were your own son, and I will do all you tell me; I know you want to be getting on with your voyage, but stay a little longer till you have taken a bath and refreshed yourself. I will then give you a present, and you shall go on your way rejoicing; I will give you one of great beauty and value – a keepsake such as only dear friends give to one another."

Athene answered, "Do not try to keep me, for I would be on my way at once. As for any present you may be disposed to make me, keep it till I come again, and I will take it home with me. You shall give me a very good one, and I will give you one of no less value in return."

With these words she flew away like a bird into the air, but she had given Telemachus courage, and had made him think more than ever about his father. He felt the change, wondered at it, and knew that the stranger had been a god, so he went straight to where the suitors were sitting.

Phemius was still singing, and his hearers sat rapt in silence as he told the sad tale of the return from Troy, and the ills Athene had laid upon the Achaeans. Penelope, daughter of Icarius, heard his song from her room upstairs, and came down by the great staircase, not alone, but attended by two of her handmaids. When she reached the suitors she stood by one of the bearing posts that supported the roof of the cloisters with a staid maiden on either side of her. She held a veil, moreover, before her face, and was weeping bitterly.

"Phemius," she cried, "you know many another feat of gods and heroes, such as poets love to celebrate. Sing the suitors some one of these, and let them drink their wine in silence, but cease this sad tale, for it breaks my sorrowful heart, and reminds me of my lost husband whom I mourn ever without ceasing, and whose name was great over all Hellas and middle Argos."

"Mother," answered Telemachus, "let the bard sing what he has a mind to; bards do not make the ills they sing of; it is Zeus, not they, who makes them, and who sends weal or woe upon mankind according to his own good pleasure. This fellow means no harm by singing the ill-fated return

of the Danaans, for people always applaud the latest songs most warmly. Make up your mind to it and bear it; Odysseus is not the only man who never came back from Troy, but many another went down as well as he. Go, then, within the house and busy yourself with your daily duties, your loom, your distaff, and the ordering of your servants; for speech is man's matter, and mine above all others – for it is I who am master here."

She went wondering back into the house, and laid her son's saying in her heart. Then, going upstairs with her handmaids into her room, she mourned her dear husband till Athene shed sweet sleep over her eyes. But the suitors were clamorous throughout the covered cloisters, and prayed each one that he might be her bed fellow.

Then Telemachus spoke, "Shameless," he cried, "and insolent suitors, let us feast at our pleasure now, and let there be no brawling, for it is a rare thing to hear a man with such a divine voice as Phemius has; but in the morning meet me in full assembly that I may give you formal notice to depart, and feast at one another's houses, turn and turn about, at your own cost. If on the other hand you choose to persist in spunging upon one man, heaven help me, but Zeus shall reckon with you in full, and when you fall in my father's house there shall be no man to avenge you."

The suitors bit their lips as they heard him, and marvelled at the boldness of his speech. Then, Antinous, son of Eupeithes, said, "The gods seem to have given you lessons in bluster and tall talking; may Zeus never grant you to be chief in Ithaca as your father was before you."

Telemachus answered, "Antinous, do not chide with me, but, god willing, I will be chief too if I can. Is this the worst fate you can think of for me? It is no bad thing to be a chief, for it brings both riches and honour. Still, now that Odysseus is dead there are many great men in Ithaca both old and young, and some other may take the lead among them; nevertheless I will be chief in my own house, and will rule those whom Odysseus has won for me."

Then Eurymachus, son of Polybus, answered, "It rests with heaven to decide who shall be chief among us, but you shall be master in your own house and over your own possessions; no one while there is a man in Ithaca shall do you violence nor rob you. And now, my good fellow, I want to know about this stranger. What country does he come from? Of what family is he, and where is his estate? Has he brought you news about the

return of your father, or was he on business of his own? He seemed a well to do man, but he hurried off so suddenly that he was gone in a moment before we could get to know him."

"My father is dead and gone," answered Telemachus, "and even if some rumour reaches me I put no more faith in it now. My mother does indeed sometimes send for a soothsayer and question him, but I give his prophecyings no heed. As for the stranger, he was Mentes, son of Anchialus, chief of the Taphians, an old friend of my father's." But in his heart he knew that it had been the goddess.

The suitors then returned to their singing and dancing until the evening; but when night fell upon their pleasuring they went home to bed each in his own abode. Telemachus' room was high up in a tower that looked on to the outer court; hither, then, he hied, brooding and full of thought. A good old woman, Euryclea, daughter of Ops, the son of Pisenor, went before him with a couple of blazing torches. Laertes had bought her with his own money when she was quite young; he gave the worth of twenty oxen for her, and shewed as much respect to her in his household as he did to his own wedded wife, but he did not take her to his bed for he feared his wife's resentment. She it was who now lighted Telemachus to his room, and she loved him better than any of the other women in the house did, for she had nursed him when he was a baby. He opened the door of his bed room and sat down upon the bed; as he took off his shirt he gave it to the good old woman, who folded it tidily up, and hung it for him over a peg by his bed side, after which she went out, pulled the door to by a silver catch, and drew the bolt home by means of the strap. But Telemachus as he lay covered with a woollen fleece kept thinking all night through of his intended voyage and of the counsel that Athene had given him.

# Book 2

**NOW WHEN** the child of morning, rosy-fingered Dawn, appeared Telemachus rose and dressed himself. He bound his sandals on to his comely feet, girded his sword about his shoulder, and left his room looking like an immortal god. He at once sent the criers round to call the people in assembly, so they called them and the people gathered thereon; then, when they were got together, he went to the place of assembly spear in hand –

not alone, for his two hounds went with him. Athene endowed him with a presence of such divine comeliness that all marvelled at him as he went by, and when he took his place in his father's seat even the oldest councillors made way for him.

Aegyptius, a man bent double with age, and of infinite experience, was the first to speak. His son Antiphus had gone with Odysseus to Ilius, land of noble steeds, but the savage Cyclops had killed him when they were all shut up in the cave, and had cooked his last dinner for him. He had three sons left, of whom two still worked on their father's land, while the third, Eurynomus, was one of the suitors; nevertheless their father could not get over the loss of Antiphus, and was still weeping for him when he began his speech.

"Men of Ithaca," he said, "hear my words. From the day Odysseus left us there has been no meeting of our councillors until now; who then can it be, whether old or young, that finds it so necessary to convene us? Has he got wind of some host approaching, and does he wish to warn us, or would he speak upon some other matter of public moment? I am sure he is an excellent person, and I hope Zeus will grant him his heart's desire."

Telemachus took this speech as of good omen and rose at once, for he was bursting with what he had to say. He stood in the middle of the assembly and the good herald Pisenor brought him his staff. Then, turning to Aegyptius, "Sir," said he, "it is I, as you will shortly learn, who have convened you, for it is I who am the most aggrieved. I have not got wind of any host approaching about which I would warn you, nor is there any matter of public moment on which I would speak. My grievance is purely personal, and turns on two great misfortunes which have fallen upon my house. The first of these is the loss of my excellent father, who was chief among all you here present, and was like a father to every one of you; the second is much more serious, and ere long will be the utter ruin of my estate. The sons of all the chief men among you are pestering my mother to marry them against her will. They are afraid to go to her father Icarius, asking him to choose the one he likes best, and to provide marriage gifts for his daughter, but day by day they keep hanging about my father's house, sacrificing our oxen, sheep, and fat goats for their banquets, and never giving so much as a thought to the quantity of wine they drink. No estate can stand such recklessness; we have now no Odysseus to ward off

harm from our doors, and I cannot hold my own against them. I shall never all my days be as good a man as he was, still I would indeed defend myself if I had power to do so, for I cannot stand such treatment any longer; my house is being disgraced and ruined. Have respect, therefore, to your own consciences and to public opinion. Fear, too, the wrath of heaven, lest the gods should be displeased and turn upon you. I pray you by Zeus and Themis, who is the beginning and the end of councils, do not hold back, my friends, and leave me singlehanded – unless it be that my brave father Odysseus did some wrong to the Achaeans which you would now avenge on me, by aiding and abetting these suitors. Moreover, if I am to be eaten out of house and home at all, I had rather you did the eating yourselves, for I could then take action against you to some purpose, and serve you with notices from house to house till I got paid in full, whereas now I have no remedy."

With this Telemachus dashed his staff to the ground and burst into tears. Every one was very sorry for him, but they all sat still and no one ventured to make him an angry answer, save only Antinous, who spoke thus:

"Telemachus, insolent braggart that you are, how dare you try to throw the blame upon us suitors? It is your mother's fault not ours, for she is a very artful woman. This three years past, and close on four, she had been driving us out of our minds, by encouraging each one of us, and sending him messages without meaning one word of what she says. And then there was that other trick she played us. She set up a great tambour frame in her room, and began to work on an enormous piece of fine needlework. 'Sweet hearts,' said she, 'Odysseus is indeed dead, still do not press me to marry again immediately, wait – for I would not have skill in needlework perish unrecorded – till I have completed a pall for the hero Laertes, to be in readiness against the time when death shall take him. He is very rich, and the women of the place will talk if he is laid out without a pall.'

"This was what she said, and we assented; whereon we could see her working on her great web all day long, but at night she would unpick the stitches again by torchlight. She fooled us in this way for three years and we never found her out, but as time wore on and she was now in her fourth year, one of her maids who knew what she was doing told us, and we caught her in the act of undoing her work, so she had to finish it whether she would or no. The suitors, therefore, make you this answer, that both

you and the Achaeans may understand – ‘Send your mother away, and bid her marry the man of her own and of her father’s choice’; for I do not know what will happen if she goes on plaguing us much longer with the airs she gives herself on the score of the accomplishments Athene has taught her, and because she is so clever. We never yet heard of such a woman; we know all about Tyro, Alcmene, Mycene, and the famous women of old, but they were nothing to your mother any one of them. It was not fair of her to treat us in that way, and as long as she continues in the mind with which heaven has now endowed her, so long shall we go on eating up your estate; and I do not see why she should change, for she gets all the honour and glory, and it is you who pay for it, not she. Understand, then, that we will not go back to our lands, neither here nor elsewhere, till she has made her choice and married some one or other of us.”

Telemachus answered, “Antinous, how can I drive the mother who bore me from my father’s house? My father is abroad and we do not know whether he is alive or dead. It will be hard on me if I have to pay Icarius the large sum which I must give him if I insist on sending his daughter back to him. Not only will he deal rigorously with me, but heaven will also punish me; for my mother when she leaves the house will call on the Erinyes to avenge her; besides, it would not be a creditable thing to do, and I will have nothing to say to it. If you choose to take offence at this, leave the house and feast elsewhere at one another’s houses at your own cost turn and turn about. If, on the other hand, you elect to persist in spunging upon one man, heaven help me, but Zeus shall reckon with you in full, and when you fall in my father’s house there shall be no man to avenge you.”

As he spoke Zeus sent two eagles from the top of the mountain, and they flew on and on with the wind, sailing side by side in their own lordly flight. When they were right over the middle of the assembly they wheeled and circled about, beating the air with their wings and glaring death into the eyes of them that were below; then, fighting fiercely and tearing at one another, they flew off towards the right over the town. The people wondered as they saw them, and asked each other what all this might be; whereon Halitherses, who was the best prophet and reader of omens among them, spoke to them plainly and in all honesty, saying:

“Hear me, men of Ithaca, and I speak more particularly to the suitors, for I see mischief brewing for them. Odysseus is not going to be away much longer; indeed he is close at hand to deal out death and destruction, not on them alone, but on many another of us who live in Ithaca. Let us then be wise in time, and put a stop to this wickedness before he comes. Let the suitors do so of their own accord; it will be better for them, for I am not prophesying without due knowledge; everything has happened to Odysseus as I foretold when the Argives set out for Troy, and he with them. I said that after going through much hardship and losing all his men he should come home again in the twentieth year and that no one would know him; and now all this is coming true.”

Eurymachus son of Polybus then said, “Go home, old man, and prophesy to your own children, or it may be worse for them. I can read these omens myself much better than you can; birds are always flying about in the sunshine somewhere or other, but they seldom mean anything. Odysseus has died in a far country, and it is a pity you are not dead along with him, instead of prating here about omens and adding fuel to the anger of Telemachus which is fierce enough as it is. I suppose you think he will give you something for your family, but I tell you – and it shall surely be – when an old man like you, who should know better, talks a young one over till he becomes troublesome, in the first place his young friend will only fare so much the worse – he will take nothing by it, for the suitors will prevent this – and in the next, we will lay a heavier fine, sir, upon yourself than you will at all like paying, for it will bear hardly upon you. As for Telemachus, I warn him in the presence of you all to send his mother back to her father, who will find her a husband and provide her with all the marriage gifts so dear a daughter may expect. Till then we shall go on harassing him with our suit; for we fear no man, and care neither for him, with all his fine speeches, nor for any fortune-telling of yours. You may preach as much as you please, but we shall only hate you the more. We shall go back and continue to eat up Telemachus’ estate without paying him, till such time as his mother leaves off tormenting us by keeping us day after day on the tiptoe of expectation, each vying with the other in his suit for a prize of such rare perfection. Besides we cannot go after the other women whom we should marry in due course, but for the way in which she treats us.”

Then Telemachus said, “Eurymachus, and you other suitors, I shall say no more, and entreat you no further, for the gods and the people of Ithaca now know my story. Give me, then, a ship and a crew of twenty men to take me hither and thither, and I will go to Sparta and to Pylos in quest of my father who has so long been missing. Some one may tell me something, or (and people often hear things in this way) some heaven-sent message may direct me. If I can hear of him as alive and on his way home I will put up with the waste you suitors will make for yet another twelve months. If on the other hand I hear of his death, I will return at once, celebrate his funeral rites with all due pomp, build a barrow to his memory, and make my mother marry again.”

With these words he sat down, and Mentor had been a friend of Odysseus, and had been left in charge of everything with full authority over the servants, rose to speak. He, then, plainly and in all honesty addressed them thus:

“Hear me, men of Ithaca, I hope that you may never have a kind and well-disposed ruler any more, nor one who will govern you equitably; I hope that all your chiefs henceforward may be cruel and unjust, for there is not one of you but has forgotten Odysseus, who ruled you as though he were your father. I am not half so angry with the suitors, for if they choose to do violence in the naughtiness of their hearts, and wager their heads that Odysseus will not return, they can take the high hand and eat up his estate, but as for you others I am shocked at the way in which you all sit still without even trying to stop such scandalous goings on – which you could do if you chose, for you are many and they are few.”

Leiocritus, son of Evenor, answered him saying, “Mentor, what folly is all this, that you should set the people to stay us? It is a hard thing for one man to fight with many about his victuals. Even though Odysseus himself were to set upon us while we are feasting in his house, and do his best to oust us, his wife, who wants him back so very badly, would have small cause for rejoicing, and his blood would be upon his own head if he fought against such great odds. There is no sense in what you have been saying. Now, therefore, do you people go about your business, and let his father’s old friends, Mentor and Halitherses, speed this boy on his journey, if he goes at all – which I do not think he will, for he is more likely to stay where he is till some one comes and tells him something.”

On this he broke up the assembly, and every man went back to his own abode, while the suitors returned to the house of Odysseus.

Then Telemachus went all alone by the sea side, washed his hands in the grey waves, and prayed to Athene.

“Hear me,” he cried, “you god who visited me yesterday, and bade me sail the seas in search of my father who has so long been missing. I would obey you, but the Achaeans, and more particularly the wicked suitors, are hindering me that I cannot do so.”

As he thus prayed, Athene came close up to him in the likeness and with the voice of Mentor. “Telemachus,” said she, “if you are made of the same stuff as your father you will be neither fool nor coward henceforward, for Odysseus never broke his word nor left his work half done. If, then, you take after him, your voyage will not be fruitless, but unless you have the blood of Odysseus and of Penelope in your veins I see no likelihood of your succeeding. Sons are seldom as good men as their fathers; they are generally worse, not better; still, as you are not going to be either fool or coward henceforward, and are not entirely without some share of your father’s wise discernment, I look with hope upon your undertaking. But mind you never make common cause with any of those foolish suitors, for they have neither sense nor virtue, and give no thought to death and to the doom that will shortly fall on one and all of them, so that they shall perish on the same day. As for your voyage, it shall not be long delayed; your father was such an old friend of mine that I will find you a ship, and will come with you myself. Now, however, return home, and go about among the suitors; begin getting provisions ready for your voyage; see everything well stowed, the wine in jars, and the barley meal, which is the staff of life, in leathern bags, while I go round the town and beat up volunteers at once. There are many ships in Ithaca both old and new; I will run my eye over them for you and will choose the best; we will get her ready and will put out to sea without delay.”

Thus spoke Athene daughter of Zeus, and Telemachus lost no time in doing as the goddess told him. He went moodily home, and found the suitors flaying goats and singeing pigs in the outer court. Antinous came up to him at once and laughed as he took his hand in his own, saying, “Telemachus, my fine fire-eater, bear no more ill blood neither in word nor deed, but eat and drink with us as you used to do. The Achaeans will

find you in everything – a ship and a picked crew to boot – so that you can set sail for Pylos at once and get news of your noble father."

"Antinous," answered Telemachus, "I cannot eat in peace, nor take pleasure of any kind with such men as you are. Was it not enough that you should waste so much good property of mine while I was yet a boy? Now that I am older and know more about it, I am also stronger, and whether here among this people, or by going to Pylos, I will do you all the harm I can. I shall go, and my going will not be in vain – though, thanks to you suitors, I have neither ship nor crew of my own, and must be passenger not captain."

As he spoke he snatched his hand from that of Antinous. Meanwhile the others went on getting dinner ready about the buildings, jeering at him tauntingly as they did so.

"Telemachus," said one youngster, "means to be the death of us; I suppose he thinks he can bring friends to help him from Pylos, or again from Sparta, where he seems bent on going. Or will he go to Ephyra as well, for poison to put in our wine and kill us?"

Another said, "Perhaps if Telemachus goes on board ship, he will be like his father and perish far from his friends. In this case we should have plenty to do, for we could then divide up his property amongst us: as for the house we can let his mother and the man who marries her have that."

This was how they talked. But Telemachus went down into the lofty and spacious store-room where his father's treasure of gold and bronze lay heaped up upon the floor, and where the linen and spare clothes were kept in open chests. Here, too, there was a store of fragrant olive oil, while casks of old, well-ripened wine, unblended and fit for a god to drink, were ranged against the wall in case Odysseus should come home again after all. The room was closed with well-made doors opening in the middle; moreover the faithful old house-keeper Euryclea, daughter of Ops the son of Pisenor, was in charge of everything both night and day. Telemachus called her to the store-room and said:

"Nurse, draw me off some of the best wine you have, after what you are keeping for my father's own drinking, in case, poor man, he should escape death, and find his way home again after all. Let me have twelve jars, and see that they all have lids; also fill me some well-sewn leathern bags with barley meal – about twenty measures in all. Get these things put together

at once, and say nothing about it. I will take everything away this evening as soon as my mother has gone upstairs for the night. I am going to Sparta and to Pylos to see if I can hear anything about the return of my dear father."

When Euryclea heard this she began to cry, and spoke fondly to him, saying, "My dear child, what ever can have put such notion as that into your head? Where in the world do you want to go to – you, who are the one hope of the house? Your poor father is dead and gone in some foreign country nobody knows where, and as soon as your back is turned these wicked ones here will be scheming to get you put out of the way, and will share all your possessions among themselves; stay where you are among your own people, and do not go wandering and worrying your life out on the barren ocean."

"Fear not, nurse," answered Telemachus, "my scheme is not without heaven's sanction; but swear that you will say nothing about all this to my mother, till I have been away some ten or twelve days, unless she hears of my having gone, and asks you; for I do not want her to spoil her beauty by crying."

The old woman swore most solemnly that she would not, and when she had completed her oath, she began drawing off the wine into jars, and getting the barley meal into the bags, while Telemachus went back to the suitors.

Then Athene bethought her of another matter. She took his shape, and went round the town to each one of the crew, telling them to meet at the ship by sundown. She went also to Noemon son of Phronius, and asked him to let her have a ship – which he was very ready to do. When the sun had set and darkness was over all the land, she got the ship into the water, put all the tackle on board her that ships generally carry, and stationed her at the end of the harbour. Presently the crew came up, and the goddess spoke encouragingly to each of them.

Furthermore she went to the house of Odysseus, and threw the suitors into a deep slumber. She caused their drink to fuddle them, and made them drop their cups from their hands, so that instead of sitting over their wine, they went back into the town to sleep, with their eyes heavy and full of drowsiness. Then she took the form and voice of Mentor, and called Telemachus to come outside.

“Telemachus,” said she, “the men are on board and at their oars, waiting for you to give your orders, so make haste and let us be off.”

On this she led the way, while Telemachus followed in her steps. When they got to the ship they found the crew waiting by the water side, and Telemachus said, “Now my men, help me to get the stores on board; they are all put together in the cloister, and my mother does not know anything about it, nor any of the maid servants except one.”

With these words he led the way and the others followed after. When they had brought the things as he told them, Telemachus went on board, Athene going before him and taking her seat in the stern of the vessel, while Telemachus sat beside her. Then the men loosed the hawsers and took their places on the benches. Athene sent them a fair wind from the West, that whistled over the deep blue waves whereon Telemachus told them to catch hold of the ropes and hoist sail, and they did as he told them. They set the mast in its socket in the cross plank, raised it, and made it fast with the forestays; then they hoisted their white sails aloft with ropes of twisted ox hide. As the sail bellied out with the wind, the ship flew through the deep blue water, and the foam hissed against her bows as she sped onward. Then they made all fast throughout the ship, filled the mixing bowls to the brim, and made drink offerings to the immortal gods that are from everlasting, but more particularly to the grey-eyed daughter of Zeus.

Thus, then, the ship sped on her way through the watches of the night from dark till dawn…

# Book 3

**BUT AS THE SUN** was rising from the fair sea into the firmament of heaven to shed light on mortals and immortals, they reached Pylos the city of Neleus. Now the people of Pylos were gathered on the sea shore to offer sacrifice of black bulls to Poseidon lord of the Earthquake. There were nine guilds with five hundred men in each, and there were nine bulls to each guild. As they were eating the inward meats and burning the thigh bones on the embers in the name of Poseidon, Telemachus and his crew arrived, furled their sails, brought their ship to anchor, and went ashore.

Athene led the way and Telemachus followed her. Presently she said, “Telemachus, you must not be in the least shy or nervous; you have taken

this voyage to try and find out where your father is buried and how he came by his end; so go straight up to Nestor that we may see what he has got to tell us. Beg of him to speak the truth, and he will tell no lies, for he is an excellent person."

"But how, Mentor," replied Telemachus, "dare I go up to Nestor, and how am I to address him? I have never yet been used to holding long conversations with people, and am ashamed to begin questioning one who is so much older than myself."

"Some things, Telemachus," answered Athene, "will be suggested to you by your own instinct, and heaven will prompt you further; for I am assured that the gods have been with you from the time of your birth until now."

She then went quickly on, and Telemachus followed in her steps till they reached the place where the guilds of the Pylian people were assembled. There they found Nestor sitting with his sons, while his company round him were busy getting dinner ready, and putting pieces of meat on to the spits while other pieces were cooking. When they saw the strangers they crowded round them, took them by the hand and bade them take their places. Nestor's son Pisistratus at once offered his hand to each of them, and seated them on some soft sheepskins that were lying on the sands near his father and his brother Thrasymedes. Then he gave them their portions of the inward meats and poured wine for them into a golden cup, handing it to Athene first, and saluting her at the same time.

"Offer a prayer, sir," said he, "to King Poseidon, for it is his feast that you are joining; when you have duly prayed and made your drink offering, pass the cup to your friend that he may do so also. I doubt not that he too lifts his hands in prayer, for man cannot live without God in the world. Still he is younger than you are, and is much of an age with myself, so I will give you the precedence."

As he spoke he handed her the cup. Athene thought it very right and proper of him to have given it to herself first; she accordingly began praying heartily to Poseidon. "O thou," she cried, "that encirclest the earth, vouchsafe to grant the prayers of thy servants that call upon thee. More especially we pray thee send down thy grace on Nestor and on his sons; thereafter also make the rest of the Pylian people some handsome return for the goodly hecatomb they are offering you. Lastly, grant

Telemachus and myself a happy issue, in respect of the matter that has brought us in our ship to Pylos."

When she had thus made an end of praying, she handed the cup to Telemachus and he prayed likewise. By and by, when the outer meats were roasted and had been taken off the spits, the carvers gave every man his portion and they all made an excellent dinner. As soon as they had had enough to eat and drink, Nestor, knight of Gerene, began to speak.

"Now," said he, "that our guests have done their dinner, it will be best to ask them who they are. Who, then, sir strangers, are you, and from what port have you sailed? Are you traders? or do you sail the seas as rovers with your hand against every man, and every man's hand against you?"

Telemachus answered boldly, for Athene had given him courage to ask about his father and get himself a good name.

"Nestor," said he, "son of Neleus, honour to the Achaean name, you ask whence we come, and I will tell you. We come from Ithaca under Neritum, and the matter about which I would speak is of private not public import. I seek news of my unhappy father Odysseus, who is said to have sacked the town of Troy in company with yourself. We know what fate befell each one of the other heroes who fought at Troy, but as regards Odysseus heaven has hidden from us the knowledge even that he is dead at all, for no one can certify us in what place he perished, nor say whether he fell in battle on the mainland, or was lost at sea amid the waves of Amphitrite. Therefore I am suppliant at your knees, if haply you may be pleased to tell me of his melancholy end, whether you saw it with your own eyes, or heard it from some other traveller, for he was a man born to trouble. Do not soften things out of any pity for me, but tell me in all plainness exactly what you saw. If my brave father Odysseus ever did you loyal service, either by word or deed, when you Achaeans were harassed among the Trojans, bear it in mind now as in my favour and tell me truly all."

"My friend," answered Nestor, "you recall a time of much sorrow to my mind, for the brave Achaeans suffered much both at sea, while privateering under Achilles, and when fighting before the great city of king Priam. Our best men all of them fell there – Ajax, Achilles, Patroclus peer of gods in counsel, and my own dear son Antilochus, a man singularly fleet of foot and in fight valiant. But we suffered much more than this; what mortal tongue indeed could tell the whole story? Though you were to

stay here and question me for five years, or even six, I could not tell you all that the Achaeans suffered, and you would turn homeward weary of my tale before it ended. Nine long years did we try every kind of stratagem, but the hand of heaven was against us; during all this time there was no one who could compare with your father in subtlety – if indeed you are his son – I can hardly believe my eyes – and you talk just like him too – no one would say that people of such different ages could speak so much alike. He and I never had any kind of difference from first to last neither in camp nor council, but in singleness of heart and purpose we advised the Argives how all might be ordered for the best.

"When, however, we had sacked the city of Priam, and were setting sail in our ships as heaven had dispersed us, then Zeus saw fit to vex the Argives on their homeward voyage; for they had not all been either wise or understanding, and hence many came to a bad end through the displeasure of Zeus's daughter Athene, who brought about a quarrel between the two sons of Atreus.

"The sons of Atreus called a meeting which was not as it should be, for it was sunset and the Achaeans were heavy with wine. When they explained why they had called the people together, it seemed that Menelaus was for sailing homeward at once, and this displeased Agamemnon, who thought that we should wait till we had offered hecatombs to appease the anger of Athene. Fool that he was, he might have known that he would not prevail with her, for when the gods have made up their minds they do not change them lightly. So the two stood bandying hard words, whereon the Achaeans sprang to their feet with a cry that rent the air, and were of two minds as to what they should do.

"That night we rested and nursed our anger, for Zeus was hatching mischief against us. But in the morning some of us drew our ships into the water and put our goods with our women on board, while the rest, about half in number, stayed behind with Agamemnon. We – the other half – embarked and sailed; and the ships went well, for heaven had smoothed the sea. When we reached Tenedos we offered sacrifices to the gods, for we were longing to get home; cruel Zeus, however, did not yet mean that we should do so, and raised a second quarrel in the course of which some among us turned their ships back again, and sailed away under Odysseus to make their peace with Agamemnon; but I, and all the ships that were with

me pressed forward, for I saw that mischief was brewing. The son of Tydeus went on also with me, and his crews with him. Later on Menelaus joined us at Lesbos, and found us making up our minds about our course – for we did not know whether to go outside Chios by the island of Psyra, keeping this to our left, or inside Chios, over against the stormy headland of Mimas. So we asked heaven for a sign, and were shown one to the effect that we should be soonest out of danger if we headed our ships across the open sea to Euboea. This we therefore did, and a fair wind sprang up which gave us a quick passage during the night to Geraestus, where we offered many sacrifices to Poseidon for having helped us so far on our way. Four days later Diomede and his men stationed their ships in Argos, but I held on for Pylos, and the wind never fell light from the day when heaven first made it fair for me.

"Therefore, my dear young friend, I returned without hearing anything about the others. I know neither who got home safely nor who were lost but, as in duty bound, I will give you without reserve the reports that have reached me since I have been here in my own house. They say the Myrmidons returned home safely under Achilles' son Neoptolemus; so also did the valiant son of Poias, Philoctetes. Idomeneus, again, lost no men at sea, and all his followers who escaped death in the field got safe home with him to Crete. No matter how far out of the world you live, you will have heard of Agamemnon and the bad end he came to at the hands of Aegisthus – and a fearful reckoning did Aegisthus presently pay. See what a good thing it is for a man to leave a son behind him to do as Orestes did, who killed false Aegisthus the murderer of his noble father. You too, then – for you are a tall smart-looking fellow – show your mettle and make yourself a name in story."

"Nestor son of Neleus," answered Telemachus, "honour to the Achaean name, the Achaeans applaud Orestes and his name will live through all time for he has avenged his father nobly. Would that heaven might grant me to do like vengeance on the insolence of the wicked suitors, who are ill treating me and plotting my ruin; but the gods have no such happiness in store for me and for my father, so we must bear it as best we may."

"My friend," said Nestor, "now that you remind me, I remember to have heard that your mother has many suitors, who are ill disposed towards you and are making havoc of your estate. Do you submit to this tamely, or are

public feeling and the voice of heaven against you? Who knows but what Odysseus may come back after all, and pay these scoundrels in full, either single-handed or with a force of Achaeans behind him? If Athene were to take as great a liking to you as she did to Odysseus when we were fighting before Troy (for I never yet saw the gods so openly fond of any one as Athene then was of your father), if she would take as good care of you as she did of him, these wooers would soon some of them forget their wooing."

Telemachus answered, "I can expect nothing of the kind; it would be far too much to hope for. I dare not let myself think of it. Even though the gods themselves willed it no such good fortune could befall me."

On this Athene said, "Telemachus, what are you talking about? Heaven has a long arm if it is minded to save a man; and if it were me, I should not care how much I suffered before getting home, provided I could be safe when I was once there. I would rather this, than get home quickly, and then be killed in my own house as Agamemnon was by the treachery of Aegisthus and his wife. Still, death is certain, and when a man's hour is come, not even the gods can save him, no matter how fond they are of him."

"Mentor," answered Telemachus, "do not let us talk about it any more. There is no chance of my father's ever coming back; the gods have long since counselled his destruction. There is something else, however, about which I should like to ask Nestor, for he knows much more than any one else does. They say he has reigned for three generations so that it is like talking to an immortal. Tell me, therefore, Nestor, and tell me true; how did Agamemnon come to die in that way? What was Menelaus doing? And how came false Aegisthus to kill so far better a man than himself? Was Menelaus away from Achaean Argos, voyaging elsewhither among mankind, that Aegisthus took heart and killed Agamemnon?"

"I will tell you truly," answered Nestor, "and indeed you have yourself divined how it all happened. If Menelaus when he got back from Troy had found Aegisthus still alive in his house, there would have been no barrow heaped up for him, not even when he was dead, but he would have been thrown outside the city to dogs and vultures, and not a woman would have mourned him, for he had done a deed of great wickedness; but we were over there, fighting hard at Troy, and Aegisthus, who was taking his ease

quietly in the heart of Argos, cajoled Agamemnon's wife Clytemnestra with incessant flattery.

"At first she would have nothing to do with his wicked scheme, for she was of a good natural disposition; moreover there was a bard with her, to whom Agamemnon had given strict orders on setting out for Troy, that he was to keep guard over his wife; but when heaven had counselled her destruction, Aegisthus carried this bard off to a desert island and left him there for crows and seagulls to batten upon – after which she went willingly enough to the house of Aegisthus. Then he offered many burnt sacrifices to the gods, and decorated many temples with tapestries and gilding, for he had succeeded far beyond his expectations.

"Meanwhile Menelaus and I were on our way home from Troy, on good terms with one another. When we got to Sunium, which is the point of Athens, Apollo with his painless shafts killed Phrontis the steersman of Menelaus' ship (and never man knew better how to handle a vessel in rough weather) so that he died then and there with the helm in his hand, and Menelaus, though very anxious to press forward, had to wait in order to bury his comrade and give him his due funeral rites. Presently, when he too could put to sea again, and had sailed on as far as the Malean heads, Zeus counselled evil against him and made it blow hard till the waves ran mountains high. Here he divided his fleet and took the one half towards Crete where the Cydonians dwell round about the waters of the river Iardanus. There is a high headland hereabouts stretching out into the sea from a place called Gortyn, and all along this part of the coast as far as Phaestus the sea runs high when there is a south wind blowing, but after Phaestus the coast is more protected, for a small headland can make a great shelter. Here this part of the fleet was driven on to the rocks and wrecked; but the crews just managed to save themselves. As for the other five ships, they were taken by winds and seas to Egypt, where Menelaus gathered much gold and substance among people of an alien speech. Meanwhile Aegisthus here at home plotted his evil deed. For seven years after he had killed Agamemnon he ruled in Mycene, and the people were obedient under him, but in the eighth year Orestes came back from Athens to be his bane, and killed the murderer of his father. Then he celebrated the funeral rites of his mother and of false Aegisthus by a banquet to the

people of Argos, and on that very day Menelaus came home, with as much treasure as his ships could carry.

"Take my advice then, and do not go travelling about for long so far from home, nor leave your property with such dangerous people in your house; they will eat up everything you have among them, and you will have been on a fool's errand. Still, I should advise you by all means to go and visit Menelaus, who has lately come off a voyage among such distant peoples as no man could ever hope to get back from, when the winds had once carried him so far out of his reckoning; even birds cannot fly the distance in a twelve-month, so vast and terrible are the seas that they must cross. Go to him, therefore, by sea, and take your own men with you; or if you would rather travel by land you can have a chariot, you can have horses, and here are my sons who can escort you to Lacedaemon where Menelaus lives. Beg of him to speak the truth, and he will tell you no lies, for he is an excellent person."

As he spoke the sun set and it came on dark, whereon Athene said, "Sir, all that you have said is well; now, however, order the tongues of the victims to be cut, and mix wine that we may make drink-offerings to Poseidon, and the other immortals, and then go to bed, for it is bed time. People should go away early and not keep late hours at a religious festival."

Thus spoke the daughter of Zeus, and they obeyed her saying. Men servants poured water over the hands of the guests, while pages filled the mixing-bowls with wine and water, and handed it round after giving every man his drink offering; then they threw the tongues of the victims into the fire, and stood up to make their drink offerings. When they had made their offerings and had drunk each as much as he was minded, Athene and Telemachus were for going on board their ship, but Nestor caught them up at once and stayed them.

"Heaven and the immortal gods," he exclaimed, "forbid that you should leave my house to go on board of a ship. Do you think I am so poor and short of clothes, or that I have so few cloaks and as to be unable to find comfortable beds both for myself and for my guests? Let me tell you I have store both of rugs and cloaks, and shall not permit the son of my old friend Odysseus to camp down on the deck of a ship – not while I live –

nor yet will my sons after me, but they will keep open house as I have done."

Then Athene answered, "Sir, you have spoken well, and it will be much better that Telemachus should do as you have said; he, therefore, shall return with you and sleep at your house, but I must go back to give orders to my crew, and keep them in good heart. I am the only older person among them; the rest are all young men of Telemachus' own age, who have taken this voyage out of friendship; so I must return to the ship and sleep there. Moreover tomorrow I must go to the Cauconians where I have a large sum of money long owing to me. As for Telemachus, now that he is your guest, send him to Lacedaemon in a chariot, and let one of your sons go with him. Be pleased to also provide him with your best and fleetest horses."

When she had thus spoken, she flew away in the form of an eagle, and all marvelled as they beheld it. Nestor was astonished, and took Telemachus by the hand. "My friend," said he, "I see that you are going to be a great hero some day, since the gods wait upon you thus while you are still so young. This can have been none other of those who dwell in heaven than Zeus's redoubtable daughter, the Trito-born, who shewed such favour towards your brave father among the Argives. Holy queen," he continued, "vouchsafe to send down thy grace upon myself, my good wife, and my children. In return, I will offer you in sacrifice a broad-browed heifer of a year old, unbroken, and never yet brought by man under the yoke. I will gild her horns, and will offer her up to you in sacrifice."

Thus did he pray, and Athene heard his prayer. He then led the way to his own house, followed by his sons and sons in law. When they had got there and had taken their places on the benches and seats, he mixed them a bowl of sweet wine that was eleven years old when the housekeeper took the lid off the jar that held it. As he mixed the wine, he prayed much and made drink offerings to Athene, daughter of Aegis-bearing Zeus. Then, when they had made their drink offerings and had drunk each as much as he was minded, the others went home to bed each in his own abode; but Nestor put Telemachus to sleep in the room that was over the gateway along with Pisistratus, who was the only unmarried son now left him. As for himself, he slept in an inner room of the house, with the queen his wife by his side.

Now when the child of morning rosy-fingered Dawn appeared, Nestor left his couch and took his seat on the benches of white and polished marble that stood in front of his house. Here aforetime sat Neleus, peer of gods in counsel, but he was now dead, and had gone to the house of Hades; so Nestor sat in his seat sceptre in hand, as guardian of the public weal. His sons as they left their rooms gathered round him, Echephron, Stratius, Perseus, Aretus, and Thrasymedes; the sixth son was Pisistratus, and when Telemachus joined them they made him sit with them. Nestor then addressed them.

"My sons," said he, "make haste to do as I shall bid you. I wish first and foremost to propitiate the great goddess Athene, who manifested herself visibly to me during yesterday's festivities. Go, then, one or other of you to the plain, tell the stockman to look me out a heifer, and come on here with it at once. Another must go to Telemachus' ship, and invite all the crew, leaving two men only in charge of the vessel. Some one else will run and fetch Laerceus the goldsmith to gild the horns of the heifer. The rest, stay all of you where you are; tell the maids in the house to prepare an excellent dinner, and to fetch seats, and logs of wood for a burnt offering. Tell them also to bring me some clear spring water."

On this they hurried off on their several errands. The heifer was brought in from the plain, and Telemachus' crew came from the ship; the goldsmith brought the anvil, hammer, and tongs, with which he worked his gold, and Athene herself came to accept the sacrifice. Nestor gave out the gold, and the smith gilded the horns of the heifer that the goddess might have pleasure in their beauty. Then Stratius and Echephron brought her in by the horns; Aretus fetched water from the house in a ewer that had a flower pattern on it, and in his other hand he held a basket of barley meal; sturdy Thrasymedes stood by with a sharp axe, ready to strike the heifer, while Perseus held a bucket. Then Nestor began with washing his hands and sprinkling the barley meal, and he offered many a prayer to Athene as he threw a lock from the heifer's head upon the fire.

When they had done praying and sprinkling the barley meal Thrasymedes dealt his blow, and brought the heifer down with a stroke that cut through the tendons at the base of her neck, whereon the daughters and daughters in law of Nestor, and his venerable wife Eurydice (she was eldest daughter to Clymenus) screamed with delight. Then they lifted the heifer's head

from off the ground, and Pisistratus cut her throat. When she had done bleeding and was quite dead, they cut her up. They cut out the thigh bones all in due course, wrapped them round in two layers of fat, and set some pieces of raw meat on the top of them; then Nestor laid them upon the wood fire and poured wine over them, while the young men stood near him with five-pronged spits in their hands. When the thighs were burned and they had tasted the inward meats, they cut the rest of the meat up small, put the pieces on the spits and toasted them over the fire.

Meanwhile lovely Polycaste, Nestor's youngest daughter, washed Telemachus. When she had washed him and anointed him with oil, she brought him a fair mantle and shirt, and he looked like a god as he came from the bath and took his seat by the side of Nestor. When the outer meats were done they drew them off the spits and sat down to dinner where they were waited upon by some worthy henchmen, who kept pouring them out their wine in cups of gold. As soon as they had had enough to eat and drink Nestor said, "Sons, put Telemachus' horses to the chariot that he may start at once."

Thus did he speak, and they did even as he had said, and yoked the fleet horses to the chariot. The housekeeper packed them up a provision of bread, wine, and sweet meats fit for the sons of princes. Then Telemachus got into the chariot, while Pisistratus gathered up the reins and took his seat beside him. He lashed the horses on and they flew forward nothing loth into the open country, leaving the high citadel of Pylos behind them. All that day did they travel, swaying the yoke upon their necks till the sun went down and darkness was over all the land. Then they reached Pherae where Diocles lived, who was son to Ortilochus and grandson to Alpheus. Here they passed the night and Diocles entertained them hospitably. When the child of morning, rosy-fingered Dawn, appeared, they again yoked their horses and drove out through the gateway under the echoing gatehouse. Pisistratus lashed the horses on and they flew forward nothing loth; presently they came to the corn lands of the open country, and in the course of time completed their journey, so well did their steeds take them.

Now when the sun had set and darkness was over the land…

# Book 4

**THEY REACHED** the low lying city of Lacedaemon, where they drove straight to the abode of Menelaus and found him in his own house, feasting with his many clansmen in honour of the wedding of his son, and also of his daughter, whom he was marrying to the son of that valiant warrior Achilles. He had given his consent and promised her to him while he was still at Troy, and now the gods were bringing the marriage about; so he was sending her with chariots and horses to the city of the Myrmidons over whom Achilles' son was reigning. For his only son he had found a bride from Sparta, the daughter of Alector. This son, Megapenthes, was born to him of a bondwoman, for heaven vouchsafed Helen no more children after she had borne Hermione, who was fair as golden Aphrodite herself.

So the neighbours and kinsmen of Menelaus were feasting and making merry in his house. There was a bard also to sing to them and play his lyre, while two tumblers went about performing in the midst of them when the man struck up with his tune.

Telemachus and the son of Nestor stayed their horses at the gate, whereon Eteoneus servant to Menelaus came out, and as soon as he saw them ran hurrying back into the house to tell his Master. He went close up to him and said, "Menelaus, there are some strangers come here, two men, who look like sons of Zeus. What are we to do? Shall we take their horses out, or tell them to find friends elsewhere as they best can?"

Menelaus was very angry and said, "Eteoneus, son of Boethous, you never used to be a fool, but now you talk like a simpleton. Take their horses out, of course, and show the strangers in that they may have supper; you and I have staid often enough at other people's houses before we got back here, where heaven grant that we may rest in peace henceforward."

So Eteoneus bustled back and bade the other servants come with him. They took their sweating steeds from under the yoke, made them fast to the mangers, and gave them a feed of oats and barley mixed. Then they leaned the chariot against the end wall of the courtyard, and led the way into the house. Telemachus and Pisistratus were astonished when they saw it, for its splendour was as that of the sun and moon; then, when they had admired everything to their heart's content, they went into the bath room and washed themselves.

When the servants had washed them and anointed them with oil, they brought them woollen cloaks and shirts, and the two took their seats by the side of Menelaus. A maid-servant brought them water in a beautiful golden ewer, and poured it into a silver basin for them to wash their hands; and she drew a clean table beside them. An upper servant brought them bread, and offered them many good things of what there was in the house, while the carver fetched them plates of all manner of meats and set cups of gold by their side.

Menelaus then greeted them saying, “Fall to, and welcome; when you have done supper I shall ask who you are, for the lineage of such men as you cannot have been lost. You must be descended from a line of sceptre-bearing kings, for poor people do not have such sons as you are.”

On this he handed them a piece of fat roast loin, which had been set near him as being a prime part, and they laid their hands on the good things that were before them; as soon as they had had enough to eat and drink, Telemachus said to the son of Nestor, with his head so close that no one might hear, “Look, Pisistratus, man after my own heart, see the gleam of bronze and gold – of amber, ivory, and silver. Everything is so splendid that it is like seeing the palace of Olympian Zeus. I am lost in admiration.”

Menelaus overheard him and said, “No one, my sons, can hold his own with Zeus, for his house and everything about him is immortal; but among mortal men – well, there may be another who has as much wealth as I have, or there may not; but at all events I have travelled much and have undergone much hardship, for it was nearly eight years before I could get home with my fleet. I went to Cyprus, Phoenicia and the Egyptians; I went also to the Ethiopians, the Sidonians, and the Erembians, and to Libya where the lambs have horns as soon as they are born, and the sheep lamb down three times a year. Every one in that country, whether master or man, has plenty of cheese, meat, and good milk, for the ewes yield all the year round. But while I was travelling and getting great riches among these people, my brother was secretly and shockingly murdered through the perfidy of his wicked wife, so that I have no pleasure in being lord of all this wealth. Whoever your parents may be they must have told you about all this, and of my heavy loss in the ruin of a stately mansion fully and magnificently furnished. Would that I had only a third of what I now have so that I had stayed at home, and all those were living who perished on the

plain of Troy, far from Argos. I often grieve, as I sit here in my house, for one and all of them. At times I cry aloud for sorrow, but presently I leave off again, for crying is cold comfort and one soon tires of it. Yet grieve for these as I may, I do so for one man more than for them all. I cannot even think of him without loathing both food and sleep, so miserable does he make me, for no one of all the Achaeans worked so hard or risked so much as he did. He took nothing by it, and has left a legacy of sorrow to myself, for he has been gone a long time, and we know not whether he is alive or dead. His old father, his long-suffering wife Penelope, and his son Telemachus, whom he left behind him an infant in arms, are plunged in grief on his account."

Thus spoke Menelaus, and the heart of Telemachus yearned as he bethought him of his father. Tears fell from his eyes as he heard him thus mentioned, so that he held his cloak before his face with both hands. When Menelaus saw this he doubted whether to let him choose his own time for speaking, or to ask him at once and find what it was all about.

While he was thus in two minds Helen came down from her high vaulted and perfumed room, looking as lovely as Artemis herself. Adraste brought her a seat, Alcippe a soft woollen rug while Phylo fetched her the silver work-box which Alcandra wife of Polybus had given her. Polybus lived in Egyptian Thebes, which is the richest city in the whole world; he gave Menelaus two baths, both of pure silver, two tripods, and ten talents of gold; besides all this, his wife gave Helen some beautiful presents, to wit, a golden distaff, and a silver work box that ran on wheels, with a gold band round the top of it. Phylo now placed this by her side, full of fine spun yarn, and a distaff charged with violet coloured wool was laid upon the top of it. Then Helen took her seat, put her feet upon the footstool, and began to question her husband.

"Do we know, Menelaus," said she, "the names of these strangers who have come to visit us? Shall I guess right or wrong? – but I cannot help saying what I think. Never yet have I seen either man or woman so like somebody else (indeed when I look at him I hardly know what to think) as this young man is like Telemachus, whom Odysseus left as a baby behind him, when you Achaeans went to Troy with battle in your hearts, on account of my most shameless self."

“My dear wife,” replied Menelaus, “I see the likeness just as you do. His hands and feet are just like Odysseus; so is his hair, with the shape of his head and the expression of his eyes. Moreover, when I was talking about Odysseus, and saying how much he had suffered on my account, tears fell from his eyes, and he hid his face in his mantle.”

Then Pisistratus said, “Menelaus, son of Atreus, you are right in thinking that this young man is Telemachus, but he is very modest, and is ashamed to come here and begin opening up discourse with one whose conversation is so divinely interesting as your own. My father, Nestor, sent me to escort him hither, for he wanted to know whether you could give him any counsel or suggestion. A son has always trouble at home when his father has gone away leaving him without supporters; and this is how Telemachus is now placed, for his father is absent, and there is no one among his own people to stand by him.”

“Bless my heart,” replied Menelaus, “then I am receiving a visit from the son of a very dear friend, who suffered much hardship for my sake. I had always hoped to entertain him with most marked distinction when heaven had granted us a safe return from beyond the seas. I should have founded a city for him in Argos, and built him a house. I should have made him leave Ithaca with his goods, his son, and all his people, and should have sacked for them some one of the neighbouring cities that are subject to me. We should thus have seen one another continually, and nothing but death could have interrupted so close and happy an intercourse. I suppose, however, that heaven grudged us such great good fortune, for it has prevented the poor fellow from ever getting home at all.”

Thus did he speak, and his words set them all a weeping. Helen wept, Telemachus wept, and so did Menelaus, nor could Pisistratus keep his eyes from filling, when he remembered his dear brother Antilochus whom the son of bright Dawn had killed. Thereon he said to Menelaus,

“Sir, my father Nestor, when we used to talk about you at home, told me you were a person of rare and excellent understanding. If, then, it be possible, do as I would urge you. I am not fond of crying while I am getting my supper. Morning will come in due course, and in the forenoon I care not how much I cry for those that are dead and gone. This is all we can do for the poor things. We can only shave our heads for them and wring the tears from our cheeks. I had a brother who died at Troy; he was

by no means the worst man there; you are sure to have known him – his name was Antilochus; I never set eyes upon him myself, but they say that he was singularly fleet of foot and in fight valiant."

"Your discretion, my friend," answered Menelaus, "is beyond your years. It is plain you take after your father. One can soon see when a man is son to one whom heaven has blessed both as regards wife and offspring – and it has blessed Nestor from first to last all his days, giving him a green old age in his own house, with sons about him who are both well disposed and valiant. We will put an end therefore to all this weeping, and attend to our supper again. Let water be poured over our hands. Telemachus and I can talk with one another fully in the morning."

On this Asphalion, one of the servants, poured water over their hands and they laid their hands on the good things that were before them.

Then Zeus's daughter Helen bethought her of another matter. She drugged the wine with an herb that banishes all care, sorrow, and ill humour. Whoever drinks wine thus drugged cannot shed a single tear all the rest of the day, not even though his father and mother both of them drop down dead, or he sees a brother or a son hewn in pieces before his very eyes. This drug, of such sovereign power and virtue, had been given to Helen by Polydamna wife of Thon, a woman of Egypt, where there grow all sorts of herbs, some good to put into the mixing bowl and others poisonous. Moreover, every one in the whole country is a skilled physician, for they are of the race of Paeeon. When Helen had put this drug in the bowl, and had told the servants to serve the wine round, she said:

"Menelaus, son of Atreus, and you my good friends, sons of honourable men (which is as Zeus wills, for he is the giver both of good and evil, and can do what he chooses), feast here as you will, and listen while I tell you a tale in season. I cannot indeed name every single one of the exploits of Odysseus, but I can say what he did when he was before Troy, and you Achaeans were in all sorts of difficulties. He covered himself with wounds and bruises, dressed himself all in rags, and entered the enemy's city looking like a menial or a beggar, and quite different from what he did when he was among his own people. In this disguise he entered the city of Troy, and no one said anything to him. I alone recognised him and began to question him, but he was too cunning for me. When, however, I had

washed and anointed him and had given him clothes, and after I had sworn a solemn oath not to betray him to the Trojans till he had got safely back to his own camp and to the ships, he told me all that the Achaeans meant to do. He killed many Trojans and got much information before he reached the Argive camp, for all which things the Trojan women made lamentation, but for my own part I was glad, for my heart was beginning to yearn after my home, and I was unhappy about the wrong that Aphrodite had done me in taking me over there, away from my country, my girl, and my lawful wedded husband, who is indeed by no means deficient either in person or understanding."

Then Menelaus said, "All that you have been saying, my dear wife, is true. I have travelled much, and have had much to do with heroes, but I have never seen such another man as Odysseus. What endurance too, and what courage he displayed within the wooden horse, wherein all the bravest of the Argives were lying in wait to bring death and destruction upon the Trojans. At that moment you came up to us; some god who wished well to the Trojans must have set you on to it and you had Deiphobus with you. Three times did you go all round our hiding place and pat it; you called our chiefs each by his own name, and mimicked all our wives – Diomede, Odysseus, and I from our seats inside heard what a noise you made. Diomede and I could not make up our minds whether to spring out then and there, or to answer you from inside, but Odysseus held us all in check, so we sat quite still, all except Anticlus, who was beginning to answer you, when Odysseus clapped his two brawny hands over his mouth, and kept them there. It was this that saved us all, for he muzzled Anticlus till Athene took you away again."

"How sad," exclaimed Telemachus, "that all this was of no avail to save him, nor yet his own iron courage. But now, sir, be pleased to send us all to bed, that we may lie down and enjoy the blessed boon of sleep."

On this Helen told the maid servants to set beds in the room that was in the gatehouse, and to make them with good red rugs, and spread coverlets on the top of them with woollen cloaks for the guests to wear. So the maids went out, carrying a torch, and made the beds, to which a man-servant presently conducted the strangers. Thus, then, did Telemachus and Pisistratus sleep there in the forecourt, while the son of Atreus lay in an inner room with lovely Helen by his side.

When the child of morning, rosy-fingered Dawn appeared, Menelaus rose and dressed himself. He bound his sandals on to his comely feet, girded his sword about his shoulders, and left his room looking like an immortal god. Then, taking a seat near Telemachus he said:

"And what, Telemachus, has led you to take this long sea voyage to Lacedaemon? Are you on public, or private business? Tell me all about it."

"I have come, sir," replied Telemachus, "to see if you can tell me anything about my father. I am being eaten out of house and home; my fair estate is being wasted, and my house is full of miscreants who keep killing great numbers of my sheep and oxen, on the pretence of paying their addresses to my mother. Therefore, I am suppliant at your knees if haply you may tell me about my father's melancholy end, whether you saw it with your own eyes, or heard it from some other traveller; for he was a man born to trouble. Do not soften things out of any pity for myself, but tell me in all plainness exactly what you saw. If my brave father Odysseus ever did you loyal service either by word or deed, when you Achaeans were harassed by the Trojans, bear it in mind now as in my favour and tell me truly all."

Menelaus on hearing this was very much shocked. "So," he exclaimed, "these cowards would usurp a brave man's bed? A hind might as well lay her new born young in the lair of a lion, and then go off to feed in the forest or in some grassy dell: the lion when he comes back to his lair will make short work with the pair of them – and so will Odysseus with these suitors. By father Zeus, Athene, and Apollo, if Odysseus is still the man that he was when he wrestled with Philomeleides in Lesbos, and threw him so heavily that all the Achaeans cheered him – if he is still such and were to come near these suitors, they would have a short shrift and a sorry wedding. As regards your questions, however, I will not prevaricate nor deceive you, but will tell you without concealment all that the old man of the sea told me.

"I was trying to come on here, but the gods detained me in Egypt, for my hecatombs had not given them full satisfaction, and the gods are very strict about having their dues. Now off Egypt, about as far as a ship can sail in a day with a good stiff breeze behind her, there is an island called Pharos – it has a good harbour from which vessels can get out into open sea when they have taken in water – and here the gods becalmed me

twenty days without so much as a breath of fair wind to help me forward. We should have run clean out of provisions and my men would have starved, if a goddess had not taken pity upon me and saved me in the person of Idothea, daughter to Proteus, the old man of the sea, for she had taken a great fancy to me.

"She came to me one day when I was by myself, as I often was, for the men used to go with their barbed hooks, all over the island in the hope of catching a fish or two to save them from the pangs of hunger. 'Stranger,' said she, 'it seems to me that you like starving in this way – at any rate it does not greatly trouble you, for you stick here day after day, without even trying to get away though your men are dying by inches.'

"'Let me tell you,' said I, 'whichever of the goddesses you may happen to be, that I am not staying here of my own accord, but must have offended the gods that live in heaven. Tell me, therefore, for the gods know everything, which of the immortals it is that is hindering me in this way, and tell me also how I may sail the sea so as to reach my home.'

"'Stranger,' replied she, 'I will make it all quite clear to you. There is an old immortal who lives under the sea hereabouts and whose name is Proteus. He is an Egyptian, and people say he is my father; he is Poseidon's head man and knows every inch of ground all over the bottom of the sea. If you can snare him and hold him tight, he will tell you about your voyage, what courses you are to take, and how you are to sail the sea so as to reach your home. He will also tell you, if you so will, all that has been going on at your house both good and bad, while you have been away on your long and dangerous journey.'

"'Can you show me,' said I, 'some stratagem by means of which I may catch this old god without his suspecting it and finding me out? For a god is not easily caught – not by a mortal man.'

"'Stranger,' said she, 'I will make it all quite clear to you. About the time when the sun shall have reached mid heaven, the old man of the sea comes up from under the waves, heralded by the West wind that furs the water over his head. As soon as he has come up he lies down, and goes to sleep in a great sea cave, where the seals – Halosydne's chickens as they call them – come up also from the grey sea, and go to sleep in shoals all round him; and a very strong and fish-like smell do they bring with them. Early tomorrow morning I will take you to this place and will lay you in

ambush. Pick out, therefore, the three best men you have in your fleet, and I will tell you all the tricks that the old man will play you.

"'First he will look over all his seals, and count them; then, when he has seen them and tallied them on his five fingers, he will go to sleep among them, as a shepherd among his sheep. The moment you see that he is asleep seize him; put forth all your strength and hold him fast, for he will do his very utmost to get away from you. He will turn himself into every kind of creature that goes upon the earth, and will become also both fire and water; but you must hold him fast and grip him tighter and tighter, till he begins to talk to you and comes back to what he was when you saw him go to sleep; then you may slacken your hold and let him go; and you can ask him which of the gods it is that is angry with you, and what you must do to reach your home over the seas.'

"Having so said she dived under the waves, whereon I turned back to the place where my ships were ranged upon the shore; and my heart was clouded with care as I went along. When I reached my ship we got supper ready, for night was falling, and camped down upon the beach.

"When the child of morning rosy-fingered Dawn appeared, I took the three men on whose prowess of all kinds I could most rely, and went along by the sea-side, praying heartily to heaven. Meanwhile the goddess fetched me up four seal skins from the bottom of the sea, all of them just skinned, for she meant playing a trick upon her father. Then she dug four pits for us to lie in, and sat down to wait till we should come up. When we were close to her, she made us lie down in the pits one after the other, and threw a seal skin over each of us. Our ambuscade would have been intolerable, for the stench of the fishy seals was most distressing – who would go to bed with a sea monster if he could help it? – but here, too, the goddess helped us, and thought of something that gave us great relief, for she put some ambrosia under each man's nostrils, which was so fragrant that it killed the smell of the seals.

"We waited the whole morning and made the best of it, watching the seals come up in hundreds to bask upon the sea shore, till at noon the old man of the sea came up too, and when he had found his fat seals he went over them and counted them. We were among the first he counted, and he never suspected any guile, but laid himself down to sleep as soon as he had done counting. Then we rushed upon him with a shout and seized him; on

which he began at once with his old tricks, and changed himself first into a lion with a great mane; then all of a sudden he became a dragon, a leopard, a wild boar; the next moment he was running water, and then again directly he was a tree, but we stuck to him and never lost hold, till at last the cunning old creature became distressed, and said, ‘Which of the gods was it, Son of Atreus, that hatched this plot with you for snaring me and seizing me against my will? What do you want?’

“‘You know that yourself, old man,’ I answered, ‘you will gain nothing by trying to put me off. It is because I have been kept so long in this island, and see no sign of my being able to get away. I am losing all heart; tell me, then, for you gods know everything, which of the immortals it is that is hindering me, and tell me also how I may sail the sea so as to reach my home?’

“Then,’ he said, ‘if you would finish your voyage and get home quickly, you must offer sacrifices to Zeus and to the rest of the gods before embarking; for it is decreed that you shall not get back to your friends, and to your own house, till you have returned to the heaven-fed stream of Egypt, and offered holy hecatombs to the immortal gods that reign in heaven. When you have done this they will let you finish your voyage.’

“I was broken hearted when I heard that I must go back all that long and terrible voyage to Egypt; nevertheless, I answered, ‘I will do all, old man, that you have laid upon me; but now tell me, and tell me true, whether all the Achaeans whom Nestor and I left behind us when we set sail from Troy have got home safely, or whether any one of them came to a bad end either on board his own ship or among his friends when the days of his fighting were done.’

“‘Son of Atreus,’ he answered, ‘why ask me? You had better not know what I can tell you, for your eyes will surely fill when you have heard my story. Many of those about whom you ask are dead and gone, but many still remain, and only two of the chief men among the Achaeans perished during their return home. As for what happened on the field of battle – you were there yourself. A third Achaean leader is still at sea, alive, but hindered from returning. Ajax was wrecked, for Poseidon drove him on to the great rocks of Gyrae; nevertheless, he let him get safe out of the water, and in spite of all Athene’s hatred he would have escaped death, if he had not ruined himself by boasting. He said the gods could not drown him even

though they had tried to do so, and when Poseidon heard this large talk, he seized his trident in his two brawny hands, and split the rock of Gyrae in two pieces. The base remained where it was, but the part on which Ajax was sitting fell headlong into the sea and carried Ajax with it; so he drank salt water and was drowned.

"'Your brother and his ships escaped, for Hera protected him, but when he was just about to reach the high promontory of Malea, he was caught by a heavy gale which carried him out to sea again sorely against his will, and drove him to the foreland where Thyestes used to dwell, but where Aegisthus was then living. By and by, however, it seemed as though he was to return safely after all, for the gods backed the wind into its old quarter and they reached home; whereon Agamemnon kissed his native soil, and shed tears of joy at finding himself in his own country.

"'Now there was a watchman whom Aegisthus kept always on the watch, and to whom he had promised two talents of gold. This man had been looking out for a whole year to make sure that Agamemnon did not give him the slip and prepare war; when, therefore, this man saw Agamemnon go by, he went and told Aegisthus, who at once began to lay a plot for him. He picked twenty of his bravest warriors and placed them in ambuscade on one side the cloister, while on the opposite side he prepared a banquet. Then he sent his chariots and horsemen to Agamemnon, and invited him to the feast, but he meant foul play. He got him there, all unsuspicious of the doom that was awaiting him, and killed him when the banquet was over as though he were butchering an ox in the shambles; not one of Agamemnon's followers was left alive, nor yet one of Aegisthus', but they were all killed there in the cloisters.'

"Thus spoke Proteus, and I was broken hearted as I heard him. I sat down upon the sands and wept; I felt as though I could no longer bear to live nor look upon the light of the sun. Presently, when I had had my fill of weeping and writhing upon the ground, the old man of the sea said, 'Son of Atreus, do not waste any more time in crying so bitterly; it can do no manner of good; find your way home as fast as ever you can, for Aegisthus may be still alive, and even though Orestes has been beforehand with you in killing him, you may yet come in for his funeral.'

"On this I took comfort in spite of all my sorrow, and said, 'I know, then, about these two; tell me, therefore, about the third man of whom you

spoke; is he still alive, but at sea, and unable to get home? Or is he dead? Tell me, no matter how much it may grieve me.'

"'The third man,' he answered, 'is Odysseus who dwells in Ithaca. I can see him in an island sorrowing bitterly in the house of the nymph Calypso, who is keeping him prisoner, and he cannot reach his home for he has no ships nor sailors to take him over the sea. As for your own end, Menelaus, you shall not die in Argos, but the gods will take you to the Elysian plain, which is at the ends of the world. There fair-haired Rhadamanthus reigns, and men lead an easier life than any where else in the world, for in Elysium there falls not rain, nor hail, nor snow, but Oceanus breathes ever with a West wind that sings softly from the sea, and gives fresh life to all men. This will happen to you because you have married Helen, and are Zeus's son-in-law.'

"As he spoke he dived under the waves, whereon I turned back to the ships with my companions, and my heart was clouded with care as I went along. When we reached the ships we got supper ready, for night was falling, and camped down upon the beach. When the child of morning, rosy-fingered Dawn appeared, we drew our ships into the water, and put our masts and sails within them; then we went on board ourselves, took our seats on the benches, and smote the grey sea with our oars. I again stationed my ships in the heaven-fed stream of Egypt, and offered hecatombs that were full and sufficient. When I had thus appeased heaven's anger, I raised a barrow to the memory of Agamemnon that his name might live for ever, after which I had a quick passage home, for the gods sent me a fair wind.

"And now for yourself – stay here some ten or twelve days longer, and I will then speed you on your way. I will make you a noble present of a chariot and three horses. I will also give you a beautiful chalice that so long as you live you may think of me whenever you make a drink-offering to the immortal gods."

"Son of Atreus," replied Telemachus, "do not press me to stay longer; I should be contented to remain with you for another twelve months; I find your conversation so delightful that I should never once wish myself at home with my parents; but my crew whom I have left at Pylos are already impatient, and you are detaining me from them. As for any present you may be disposed to make me, I had rather that it should be a piece of plate.

I will take no horses back with me to Ithaca, but will leave them to adorn your own stables, for you have much flat ground in your kingdom where lotus thrives, as also meadow-sweet and wheat and barley, and oats with their white and spreading ears; whereas in Ithaca we have neither open fields nor racecourses, and the country is more fit for goats than horses, and I like it the better for that. None of our islands have much level ground, suitable for horses, and Ithaca least of all."

Menelaus smiled and took Telemachus' hand within his own. "What you say," said he, "shows that you come of good family. I both can, and will, make this exchange for you, by giving you the finest and most precious piece of plate in all my house. It is a mixing bowl by Hephaestus's own hand, of pure silver, except the rim, which is inlaid with gold. Phaedimus, king of the Sidonians, gave it me in the course of a visit which I paid him when I returned thither on my homeward journey. I will make you a present of it."

Thus did they converse and guests kept coming to the king's house. They brought sheep and wine, while their wives had put up bread for them to take with them; so they were busy cooking their dinners in the courts.

Meanwhile the suitors were throwing discs or aiming with spears at a mark on the levelled ground in front of Odysseus' house, and were behaving with all their old insolence. Antinous and Eurymachus, who were their ringleaders and much the foremost among them all, were sitting together when Noemon son of Phronius came up and said to Antinous,

"Have we any idea, Antinous, on what day Telemachus returns from Pylos? He has a ship of mine, and I want it, to cross over to Elis: I have twelve brood mares there with yearling mule foals by their side not yet broken in, and I want to bring one of them over here and break him."

They were astounded when they heard this, for they had made sure that Telemachus had not gone to the city of Neleus. They thought he was only away somewhere on the farms, and was with the sheep, or with the swineherd; so Antinous said, "When did he go? Tell me truly, and what young men did he take with him? Were they freemen or his own bondsmen – for he might manage that too? Tell me also, did you let him have the ship of your own free will because he asked you, or did he take it without your leave?"

“I lent it him,” answered Noemon, “what else could I do when a man of his position said he was in a difficulty, and asked me to oblige him? I could not possibly refuse. As for those who went with him they were the best young men we have, and I saw Mentor go on board as captain – or some god who was exactly like him. I cannot understand it, for I saw Mentor here myself yesterday morning, and yet he was then setting out for Pylos.”

Noemon then went back to his father’s house, but Antinous and Eurymachus were very angry. They told the others to leave off playing, and to come and sit down along with themselves. When they came, Antinous son of Eupeithes spoke in anger. His heart was black with rage, and his eyes flashed fire as he said:

“Good heavens, this voyage of Telemachus is a very serious matter; we had made sure that it would come to nothing, but the young fellow has got away in spite of us, and with a picked crew too. He will be giving us trouble presently; may Zeus take him before he is full grown. Find me a ship, therefore, with a crew of twenty men, and I will lie in wait for him in the straits between Ithaca and Samos; he will then rue the day that he set out to try and get news of his father.”

Thus did he speak, and the others applauded his saying; they then all of them went inside the buildings.

It was not long ere Penelope came to know what the suitors were plotting; for a man servant, Medon, overheard them from outside the outer court as they were laying their schemes within, and went to tell his mistress. As he crossed the threshold of her room Penelope said: “Medon, what have the suitors sent you here for? Is it to tell the maids to leave their master’s business and cook dinner for them? I wish they may neither woo nor dine henceforward, neither here nor anywhere else, but let this be the very last time, for the waste you all make of my son’s estate. Did not your fathers tell you when you were children, how good Odysseus had been to them – never doing anything high-handed, nor speaking harshly to anybody? Kings may say things sometimes, and they may take a fancy to one man and dislike another, but Odysseus never did an unjust thing by anybody – which shows what bad hearts you have, and that there is no such thing as gratitude left in this world.”

Then Medon said, “I wish, Madam, that this were all; but they are plotting something much more dreadful now – may heaven frustrate their design. They are going to try and murder Telemachus as he is coming home from Pylos and Lacedaemon, where he has been to get news of his father.”

Then Penelope’s heart sank within her, and for a long time she was speechless; her eyes filled with tears, and she could find no utterance. At last, however, she said, “Why did my son leave me? What business had he to go sailing off in ships that make long voyages over the ocean like sea-horses? Does he want to die without leaving any one behind him to keep up his name?”

“I do not know,” answered Medon, “whether some god set him on to it, or whether he went on his own impulse to see if he could find out if his father was dead, or alive and on his way home.”

Then he went downstairs again, leaving Penelope in an agony of grief. There were plenty of seats in the house, but she had no heart for sitting on any one of them; she could only fling herself on the floor of her own room and cry; whereon all the maids in the house, both old and young, gathered round her and began to cry too, till at last in a transport of sorrow she exclaimed:

“My dears, heaven has been pleased to try me with more affliction than any other woman of my age and country. First I lost my brave and lion-hearted husband, who had every good quality under heaven, and whose name was great over all Hellas and middle Argos, and now my darling son is at the mercy of the winds and waves, without my having heard one word about his leaving home. You hussies, there was not one of you would so much as think of giving me a call out of my bed, though you all of you very well knew when he was starting. If I had known he meant taking this voyage, he would have had to give it up, no matter how much he was bent upon it, or leave me a corpse behind him – one or other. Now, however, go some of you and call old Dolius, who was given me by my father on my marriage, and who is my gardener. Bid him go at once and tell everything to Laertes, who may be able to hit on some plan for enlisting public sympathy on our side, as against those who are trying to exterminate his own race and that of Odysseus.”

Then the dear old nurse Euryclea said, “You may kill me, Madam, or let me live on in your house, whichever you please, but I will tell you the real truth. I knew all about it, and gave him everything he wanted in the way of bread and wine, but he made me take my solemn oath that I would not tell you anything for some ten or twelve days, unless you asked or happened to hear of his having gone, for he did not want you to spoil your beauty by crying. And now, Madam, wash your face, change your dress, and go upstairs with your maids to offer prayers to Athene, daughter of Aegis-bearing Zeus, for she can save him even though he be in the jaws of death. Do not trouble Laertes: he has trouble enough already. Besides, I cannot think that the gods hate the race of the son of Arceisius so much, but there will be a son left to come up after him, and inherit both the house and the fair fields that lie far all round it.”

With these words she made her mistress leave off crying, and dried the tears from her eyes. Penelope washed her face, changed her dress, and went upstairs with her maids. She then put some bruised barley into a basket and began praying to Athene.

“Hear me,” she cried, “Daughter of Aegis-bearing Zeus, unweariable. If ever Odysseus while he was here burned you fat thigh bones of sheep or heifer, bear it in mind now as in my favour, and save my darling son from the villainy of the suitors.”

She cried aloud as she spoke, and the goddess heard her prayer; meanwhile the suitors were clamorous throughout the covered cloister, and one of them said:

“The queen is preparing for her marriage with one or other of us. Little does she dream that her son has now been doomed to die.”

This was what they said, but they did not know what was going to happen. Then Antinous said, “Comrades, let there be no loud talking, lest some of it get carried inside. Let us be up and do that in silence, about which we are all of a mind.”

He then chose twenty men, and they went down to their ship and to the sea side; they drew the vessel into the water and got her mast and sails inside her; they bound the oars to the thole-pins with twisted thongs of leather, all in due course, and spread the white sails aloft, while their fine servants brought them their armour. Then they made the ship fast a little

way out, came on shore again, got their suppers, and waited till night should fall.

But Penelope lay in her own room upstairs unable to eat or drink, and wondering whether her brave son would escape, or be overpowered by the wicked suitors. Like a lioness caught in the toils with huntsmen hemming her in on every side she thought and thought till she sank into a slumber, and lay on her bed bereft of thought and motion.

Then Athene bethought her of another matter, and made a vision in the likeness of Penelope's sister Iphthime daughter of Icarius who had married Eumelus and lived in Pherae. She told the vision to go to the house of Odysseus, and to make Penelope leave off crying, so it came into her room by the hole through which the thong went for pulling the door to, and hovered over her head saying,

"You are asleep, Penelope: the gods who live at ease will not suffer you to weep and be so sad. Your son has done them no wrong, so he will yet come back to you."

Penelope, who was sleeping sweetly at the gates of dreamland, answered, "Sister, why have you come here? You do not come very often, but I suppose that is because you live such a long way off. Am I, then, to leave off crying and refrain from all the sad thoughts that torture me? I, who have lost my brave and lion-hearted husband, who had every good quality under heaven, and whose name was great over all Hellas and middle Argos; and now my darling son has gone off on board of a ship – a foolish fellow who has never been used to roughing it, nor to going about among gatherings of men. I am even more anxious about him than about my husband; I am all in a tremble when I think of him, lest something should happen to him, either from the people among whom he has gone, or by sea, for he has many enemies who are plotting against him, and are bent on killing him before he can return home."

Then the vision said, "Take heart, and be not so much dismayed. There is one gone with him whom many a man would be glad enough to have stand by his side, I mean Athene; it is she who has compassion upon you, and who has sent me to bear you this message."

"Then," said Penelope, "if you are a god or have been sent here by divine commission, tell me also about that other unhappy one – is he still alive, or is he already dead and in the house of Hades?"

And the vision said, “I shall not tell you for certain whether he is alive or dead, and there is no use in idle conversation.”

Then it vanished through the thong-hole of the door and was dissipated into thin air; but Penelope rose from her sleep refreshed and comforted, so vivid had been her dream.

Meantime the suitors went on board and sailed their ways over the sea, intent on murdering Telemachus. Now there is a rocky islet called Asteris, of no great size, in mid channel between Ithaca and Samos, and there is a harbour on either side of it where a ship can lie. Here then the Achaeans placed themselves in ambush.

# The Wanderings

## Book 5

**AND NOW**, as Dawn rose from her couch beside Tithonus – harbinger of light alike to mortals and immortals – the gods met in council and with them, Zeus the lord of thunder, who is their king. Thereon Athene began to tell them of the many sufferings of Odysseus, for she pitied him away there in the house of the nymph Calypso.

"Father Zeus," said she, "and all you other gods that live in everlasting bliss, I hope there may never be such a thing as a kind and well-disposed ruler any more, nor one who will govern equitably. I hope they will be all henceforth cruel and unjust, for there is not one of his subjects but has forgotten Odysseus, who ruled them as though he were their father. There he is, lying in great pain in an island where dwells the nymph Calypso, who will not let him go; and he cannot get back to his own country, for he can find neither ships nor sailors to take him over the sea. Furthermore, wicked people are now trying to murder his only son Telemachus, who is coming home from Pylos and Lacedaemon, where he has been to see if he can get news of his father."

"What, my dear, are you talking about?" replied her father, "did you not send him there yourself, because you thought it would help Odysseus to get home and punish the suitors? Besides, you are perfectly able to protect Telemachus, and to see him safely home again, while the suitors have to come hurry-skurrying back without having killed him."

When he had thus spoken, he said to his son Hermes, "Hermes, you are our messenger, go therefore and tell Calypso we have decreed that poor Odysseus is to return home. He is to be convoyed neither by gods nor men, but after a perilous voyage of twenty days upon a raft he is to reach fertile Scheria, the land of the Phaeacians, who are near of kin to the gods, and will honour him as though he were one of ourselves. They will send him in a ship to his own country, and will give him more bronze and gold and raiment than he would have brought back from Troy, if he had had all his

prize money and had got home without disaster. This is how we have settled that he shall return to his country and his friends."

Thus he spoke, and Hermes, guide and guardian, slayer of Argus, did as he was told. Forthwith he bound on his glittering golden sandals with which he could fly like the wind over land and sea. He took the wand with which he seals men's eyes in sleep or wakes them just as he pleases, and flew holding it in his hand over Pieria; then he swooped down through the firmament till he reached the level of the sea, whose waves he skimmed like a cormorant that flies fishing every hole and corner of the ocean, and drenching its thick plumage in the spray. He flew and flew over many a weary wave, but when at last he got to the island which was his journey's end, he left the sea and went on by land till he came to the cave where the nymph Calypso lived.

He found her at home. There was a large fire burning on the hearth, and one could smell from far the fragrant reek of burning cedar and sandal wood. As for herself, she was busy at her loom, shooting her golden shuttle through the warp and singing beautifully. Round her cave there was a thick wood of alder, poplar, and sweet smelling cypress trees, wherein all kinds of great birds had built their nests – owls, hawks, and chattering sea-crows that occupy their business in the waters. A vine loaded with grapes was trained and grew luxuriantly about the mouth of the cave; there were also four running rills of water in channels cut pretty close together, and turned hither and thither so as to irrigate the beds of violets and luscious herbage over which they flowed. Even a god could not help being charmed with such a lovely spot, so Hermes stood still and looked at it; but when he had admired it sufficiently he went inside the cave.

Calypso knew him at once – for the gods all know each other, no matter how far they live from one another – but Odysseus was not within; he was on the sea-shore as usual, looking out upon the barren ocean with tears in his eyes, groaning and breaking his heart for sorrow. Calypso gave Hermes a seat and said: "Why have you come to see me, Hermes – honoured, and ever welcome – for you do not visit me often? Say what you want; I will do it for you at once if I can, and if it can be done at all; but come inside, and let me set refreshment before you."

As she spoke she drew a table loaded with ambrosia beside him and mixed him some red nectar, so Hermes ate and drank till he had had

enough, and then said:

"We are speaking god and goddess to one another, and you ask me why I have come here, and I will tell you truly as you would have me do. Zeus sent me; it was no doing of mine; who could possibly want to come all this way over the sea where there are no cities full of people to offer me sacrifices or choice hecatombs? Nevertheless I had to come, for none of us other gods can cross Zeus, nor transgress his orders. He says that you have here the most ill-starred of all those who fought nine years before the city of King Priam and sailed home in the tenth year after having sacked it. On their way home they sinned against Athene, who raised both wind and waves against them, so that all his brave companions perished, and he alone was carried hither by wind and tide. Zeus says that you are to let this man go at once, for it is decreed that he shall not perish here, far from his own people, but shall return to his house and country and see his friends again."

Calypso trembled with rage when she heard this, "You gods," she exclaimed, "ought to be ashamed of yourselves. You are always jealous and hate seeing a goddess take a fancy to a mortal man, and live with him in open matrimony. So when rosy-fingered Dawn made love to Orion, you precious gods were all of you furious till Artemis went and killed him in Ortygia. So again when Demeter fell in love with Iasion, and yielded to him in a thrice-ploughed fallow field, Zeus came to hear of it before so very long and killed Iasion with his thunderbolts. And now you are angry with me too because I have a man here. I found the poor creature sitting all alone astride of a keel, for Zeus had struck his ship with lightning and sunk it in mid ocean, so that all his crew were drowned, while he himself was driven by wind and waves on to my island. I got fond of him and cherished him, and had set my heart on making him immortal, so that he should never grow old all his days; still I cannot cross Zeus, nor bring his counsels to nothing; therefore, if he insists upon it, let the man go beyond the seas again; but I cannot send him anywhere myself for I have neither ships nor men who can take him. Nevertheless I will readily give him such advice, in all good faith, as will be likely to bring him safely to his own country."

"Then send him away," said Hermes, "or Zeus will be angry with you and punish you".

On this he took his leave, and Calypso went out to look for Odysseus, for she had heard Zeus's message. She found him sitting upon the beach with his eyes ever filled with tears, and dying of sheer home sickness; for he had got tired of Calypso, and though he was forced to sleep with her in the cave by night, it was she, not he, that would have it so. As for the day time, he spent it on the rocks and on the sea shore, weeping, crying aloud for his despair, and always looking out upon the sea. Calypso then went close up to him said:

"My poor fellow, you shall not stay here grieving and fretting your life out any longer. I am going to send you away of my own free will; so go, cut some beams of wood, and make yourself a large raft with an upper deck that it may carry you safely over the sea. I will put bread, wine, and water on board to save you from starving. I will also give you clothes, and will send you a fair wind to take you home, if the gods in heaven so will it – for they know more about these things, and can settle them better than I can."

Odysseus shuddered as he heard her. "Now goddess," he answered, "there is something behind all this; you cannot be really meaning to help me home when you bid me do such a dreadful thing as put to sea on a raft. Not even a well found ship with a fair wind could venture on such a distant voyage: nothing that you can say or do shall make me go on board a raft unless you first solemnly swear that you mean me no mischief."

Calypso smiled at this and caressed him with her hand: "You know a great deal," said she, "but you are quite wrong here. May heaven above and earth below be my witnesses, with the waters of the river Styx – and this is the most solemn oath which a blessed god can take – that I mean you no sort of harm, and am only advising you to do exactly what I should do myself in your place. I am dealing with you quite straightforwardly; my heart is not made of iron, and I am very sorry for you."

When she had thus spoken she led the way rapidly before him, and Odysseus followed in her steps; so the pair, goddess and man, went on and on till they came to Calypso's cave, where Odysseus took the seat that Hermes had just left. Calypso set meat and drink before him of the food that mortals eat; but her maids brought ambrosia and nectar for herself, and they laid their hands on the good things that were before them. When they had satisfied themselves with meat and drink, Calypso spoke, saying:

“Odysseus, noble son of Laertes, so you would start home to your own land at once? Good luck go with you, but if you could only know how much suffering is in store for you before you get back to your own country, you would stay where you are, keep house along with me, and let me make you immortal, no matter how anxious you may be to see this wife of yours, of whom you are thinking all the time day after day; yet I flatter myself that I am no whit less tall or well-looking than she is, for it is not to be expected that a mortal woman should compare in beauty with an immortal.”

“Goddess,” replied Odysseus, “do not be angry with me about this. I am quite aware that my wife Penelope is nothing like so tall or so beautiful as yourself. She is only a woman, whereas you are an immortal. Nevertheless, I want to get home, and can think of nothing else. If some god wrecks me when I am on the sea, I will bear it and make the best of it. I have had infinite trouble both by land and sea already, so let this go with the rest.”

Presently the sun set and it became dark, whereon the pair retired into the inner part of the cave and went to bed.

When the child of morning rosy-fingered Dawn appeared, Odysseus put on his shirt and cloak, while the goddess wore a dress of a light gossamer fabric, very fine and graceful, with a beautiful golden girdle about her waist and a veil to cover her head. She at once set herself to think how she could speed Odysseus on his way. So she gave him a great bronze axe that suited his hands; it was sharpened on both sides, and had a beautiful olive-wood handle fitted firmly on to it. She also gave him a sharp adze, and then led the way to the far end of the island where the largest trees grew – alder, poplar and pine, that reached the sky – very dry and well seasoned, so as to sail light for him in the water. Then, when she had shown him where the best trees grew, Calypso went home, leaving him to cut them, which he soon finished doing. He cut down twenty trees in all and adzed them smooth, squaring them by rule in good workmanlike fashion. Meanwhile Calypso came back with some augers, so he bored holes with them and fitted the timbers together with bolts and rivets. He made the raft as broad as a skilled shipwright makes the beam of a large vessel, and he fixed a deck on top of the ribs, and ran a gunwale all round it. He also made a mast with a yard arm, and a rudder to steer with. He fenced the raft

all round with wicker hurdles as a protection against the waves, and then he threw on a quantity of wood. By and by Calypso brought him some linen to make the sails, and he made these too, excellently, making them fast with braces and sheets. Last of all, with the help of levers, he drew the raft down into the water.

In four days he had completed the whole work, and on the fifth Calypso sent him from the island after washing him and giving him some clean clothes. She gave him a goat skin full of black wine, and another larger one of water; she also gave him a wallet full of provisions, and found him in much good meat. Moreover, she made the wind fair and warm for him, and gladly did Odysseus spread his sail before it, while he sat and guided the raft skilfully by means of the rudder. He never closed his eyes, but kept them fixed on the Pleiads, on late-setting Bootes, and on the Bear – which men also call the wain, and which turns round and round where it is, facing Orion, and alone never dipping into the stream of Oceanus – for Calypso had told him to keep this to his left. Days seven and ten did he sail over the sea, and on the eighteenth the dim outlines of the mountains on the nearest part of the Phaeacian coast appeared, rising like a shield on the horizon.

But King Poseidon, who was returning from the Ethiopians, caught sight of Odysseus a long way off, from the mountains of the Solymi. He could see him sailing upon the sea, and it made him very angry, so he wagged his head and muttered to himself, saying, “Good heavens, so the gods have been changing their minds about Odysseus while I was away in Ethiopia, and now he is close to the land of the Phaeacians, where it is decreed that he shall escape from the calamities that have befallen him. Still, he shall have plenty of hardship yet before he has done with it.”

Thereon he gathered his clouds together, grasped his trident, stirred it round in the sea, and roused the rage of every wind that blows till earth, sea, and sky were hidden in cloud, and night sprang forth out of the heavens. Winds from East, South, North, and West fell upon him all at the same time, and a tremendous sea got up, so that Odysseus’ heart began to fail him. “Alas,” he said to himself in his dismay, “what ever will become of me? I am afraid Calypso was right when she said I should have trouble by sea before I got back home. It is all coming true. How black is Zeus making heaven with his clouds, and what a sea the winds are raising from

every quarter at once. I am now safe to perish. Blest and thrice blest were those Danaans who fell before Troy in the cause of the sons of Atreus. Would that I had been killed on the day when the Trojans were pressing me so sorely about the dead body of Achilles, for then I should have had due burial and the Achaeans would have honoured my name; but now it seems that I shall come to a most pitiable end."

As he spoke a sea broke over him with such terrific fury that the raft reeled again, and he was carried overboard a long way off. He let go the helm, and the force of the hurricane was so great that it broke the mast half way up, and both sail and yard went over into the sea. For a long time Odysseus was under water, and it was all he could do to rise to the surface again, for the clothes Calypso had given him weighed him down; but at last he got his head above water and spat out the bitter brine that was running down his face in streams. In spite of all this, however, he did not lose sight of his raft, but swam as fast as he could towards it, got hold of it, and climbed on board again so as to escape drowning. The sea took the raft and tossed it about as Autumn winds whirl thistledown round and round upon a road. It was as though the South, North, East, and West winds were all playing battledore and shuttlecock with it at once.

When he was in this plight, Ino daughter of Cadmus, also called Leucothea, saw him. She had formerly been a mere mortal, but had been since raised to the rank of a marine goddess. Seeing in what great distress Odysseus now was, she had compassion upon him, and, rising like a sea-gull from the waves, took her seat upon the raft.

"My poor good man," said she, "why is Poseidon so furiously angry with you? He is giving you a great deal of trouble, but for all his bluster he will not kill you. You seem to be a sensible person, do then as I bid you; strip, leave your raft to drive before the wind, and swim to the Phaeacian coast where better luck awaits you. And here, take my veil and put it round your chest; it is enchanted, and you can come to no harm so long as you wear it. As soon as you touch land take it off, throw it back as far as you can into the sea, and then go away again." With these words she took off her veil and gave it him. Then she dived down again like a sea-gull and vanished beneath the dark blue waters.

But Odysseus did not know what to think. "Alas," he said to himself in his dismay, "this is only some one or other of the gods who is luring me to

ruin by advising me to quit my raft. At any rate I will not do so at present, for the land where she said I should be quit of all troubles seemed to be still a good way off. I know what I will do – I am sure it will be best – no matter what happens I will stick to the raft as long as her timbers hold together, but when the sea breaks her up I will swim for it; I do not see how I can do any better than this."

While he was thus in two minds, Poseidon sent a terrible great wave that seemed to rear itself above his head till it broke right over the raft, which then went to pieces as though it were a heap of dry chaff tossed about by a whirlwind. Odysseus got astride of one plank and rode upon it as if he were on horseback; he then took off the clothes Calypso had given him, bound Ino's veil under his arms, and plunged into the sea – meaning to swim on shore. King Poseidon watched him as he did so, and wagged his head, muttering to himself and saying, "There now, swim up and down as you best can till you fall in with well-to-do people. I do not think you will be able to say that I have let you off too lightly." On this he lashed his horses and drove to Aegae where his palace is.

But Athene resolved to help Odysseus, so she bound the ways of all the winds except one, and made them lie quite still; but she roused a good stiff breeze from the North that should lay the waters till Odysseus reached the land of the Phaeacians where he would be safe.

Thereon he floated about for two nights and two days in the water, with a heavy swell on the sea and death staring him in the face; but when the third day broke, the wind fell and there was a dead calm without so much as a breath of air stirring. As he rose on the swell he looked eagerly ahead, and could see land quite near. Then, as children rejoice when their dear father begins to get better after having for a long time borne sore affliction sent him by some angry spirit, but the gods deliver him from evil, so was Odysseus thankful when he again saw land and trees, and swam on with all his strength that he might once more set foot upon dry ground. When, however, he got within earshot, he began to hear the surf thundering up against the rocks, for the swell still broke against them with a terrific roar. Everything was enveloped in spray; there were no harbours where a ship might ride, nor shelter of any kind, but only headlands, low-lying rocks, and mountain tops.

Odysseus' heart now began to fail him, and he said despairingly to himself, "Alas, Zeus has let me see land after swimming so far that I had given up all hope, but I can find no landing place, for the coast is rocky and surf-beaten, the rocks are smooth and rise sheer from the sea, with deep water close under them so that I cannot climb out for want of foot hold. I am afraid some great wave will lift me off my legs and dash me against the rocks as I leave the water – which would give me a sorry landing. If, on the other hand, I swim further in search of some shelving beach or harbour, a hurricane may carry me out to sea again sorely against my will, or heaven may send some great monster of the deep to attack me; for Amphitrite breeds many such, and I know that Poseidon is very angry with me."

While he was thus in two minds a wave caught him and took him with such force against the rocks that he would have been smashed and torn to pieces if Athene had not shown him what to do. He caught hold of the rock with both hands and clung to it groaning with pain till the wave retired, so he was saved that time; but presently the wave came on again and carried him back with it far into the sea – tearing his hands as the suckers of a polypus are torn when some one plucks it from its bed, and the stones come up along with it – even so did the rocks tear the skin from his strong hands, and then the wave drew him deep down under the water.

Here poor Odysseus would have certainly perished even in spite of his own destiny, if Athene had not helped him to keep his wits about him. He swam seaward again, beyond reach of the surf that was beating against the land, and at the same time he kept looking towards the shore to see if he could find some haven, or a spit that should take the waves aslant. By and by, as he swam on, he came to the mouth of a river, and here he thought would be the best place, for there were no rocks, and it afforded shelter from the wind. He felt that there was a current, so he prayed inwardly and said:

"Hear me, O King, whoever you may be, and save me from the anger of the sea-god Poseidon, for I approach you prayerfully. Any one who has lost his way has at all times a claim even upon the gods, wherefore in my distress I draw near to your stream, and cling to the knees of your riverhood. Have mercy upon me, O king, for I declare myself your suppliant."

Then the god staid his stream and stilled the waves, making all calm before him, and bringing him safely into the mouth of the river. Here at last Odysseus' knees and strong hands failed him, for the sea had completely broken him. His body was all swollen, and his mouth and nostrils ran down like a river with sea-water, so that he could neither breathe nor speak, and lay swooning from sheer exhaustion; presently, when he had got his breath and came to himself again, he took off the scarf that Ino had given him and threw it back into the salt stream of the river, whereon Ino received it into her hands from the wave that bore it towards her. Then he left the river, laid himself down among the rushes, and kissed the bounteous earth.

"Alas," he cried to himself in his dismay, "what ever will become of me, and how is it all to end? If I stay here upon the river bed through the long watches of the night, I am so exhausted that the bitter cold and damp may make an end of me – for towards sunrise there will be a keen wind blowing from off the river. If, on the other hand, I climb the hill side, find shelter in the woods, and sleep in some thicket, I may escape the cold and have a good night's rest, but some savage beast may take advantage of me and devour me."

In the end he deemed it best to take to the woods, and he found one upon some high ground not far from the water. There he crept beneath two shoots of olive that grew from a single stock – the one an ungrafted sucker, while the other had been grafted. No wind, however squally, could break through the cover they afforded, nor could the sun's rays pierce them, nor the rain get through them, so closely did they grow into one another. Odysseus crept under these and began to make himself a bed to lie on, for there was a great litter of dead leaves lying about – enough to make a covering for two or three men even in hard winter weather. He was glad enough to see this, so he laid himself down and heaped the leaves all round him. Then, as one who lives alone in the country, far from any neighbor, hides a brand as fire-seed in the ashes to save himself from having to get a light elsewhere, even so did Odysseus cover himself up with leaves; and Athene shed a sweet sleep upon his eyes, closed his eyelids, and made him lose all memories of his sorrows.

# Book 6

**SO HERE ODYSSEUS SLEPT**, overcome by sleep and toil; but Athene went off to the country and city of the Phaeacians – a people who used to live in the fair town of Hypereia, near the lawless Cyclopes. Now the Cyclopes were stronger than they and plundered them, so their king Nausithous moved them thence and settled them in Scheria, far from all other people. He surrounded the city with a wall, built houses and temples, and divided the lands among his people; but he was dead and gone to the house of Hades, and King Alcinous, whose counsels were inspired of heaven, was now reigning. To his house, then, did Athene hie in furtherance of the return of Odysseus.

She went straight to the beautifully decorated bedroom in which there slept a girl who was as lovely as a goddess, Nausicaa, daughter to King Alcinous. Two maid servants were sleeping near her, both very pretty, one on either side of the doorway, which was closed with well made folding doors. Athene took the form of the famous sea captain Dymas' daughter, who was a bosom friend of Nausicaa and just her own age; then, coming up to the girl's bedside like a breath of wind, she hovered over her head and said:

"Nausicaa, what can your mother have been about, to have such a lazy daughter? Here are your clothes all lying in disorder, yet you are going to be married almost immediately, and should not only be well dressed yourself, but should find good clothes for those who attend you. This is the way to get yourself a good name, and to make your father and mother proud of you. Suppose, then, that we make tomorrow a washing day, and start at daybreak. I will come and help you so that you may have everything ready as soon as possible, for all the best young men among your own people are courting you, and you are not going to remain a maid much longer. Ask your father, therefore, to have a waggon and mules ready for us at daybreak, to take the rugs, robes, and girdles, and you can ride, too, which will be much pleasanter for you than walking, for the washing-cisterns are some way from the town."

When she had said this Athene went away to Olympus, which they say is the everlasting home of the gods. Here no wind beats roughly, and neither rain nor snow can fall; but it abides in everlasting sunshine and in a great peacefulness of light, wherein the blessed gods are illumined for ever and

ever. This was the place to which the goddess went when she had given instructions to the girl.

By and by morning came and woke Nausicaa, who began wondering about her dream; she therefore went to the other end of the house to tell her father and mother all about it, and found them in their own room. Her mother was sitting by the fireside spinning her purple yarn with her maids around her, and she happened to catch her father just as he was going out to attend a meeting of the town council, which the Phaeacian aldermen had convened. She stopped him and said:

"Papa dear, could you manage to let me have a good big waggon? I want to take all our dirty clothes to the river and wash them. You are the chief man here, so it is only right that you should have a clean shirt when you attend meetings of the council. Moreover, you have five sons at home, two of them married, while the other three are good looking bachelors; you know they always like to have clean linen when they go to a dance, and I have been thinking about all this."

She did not say a word about her own wedding, for she did not like to, but her father knew and said, "You shall have the mules, my love, and whatever else you have a mind for. Be off with you, and the men shall get you a good strong waggon with a body to it that will hold all your clothes."

On this he gave his orders to the servants, who got the waggon out, harnessed the mules, and put them to, while the girl brought the clothes down from the linen room and placed them on the waggon. Her mother prepared her a basket of provisions with all sorts of good things, and a goat skin full of wine; the girl now got into the waggon, and her mother gave her also a golden cruse of oil, that she and her women might anoint themselves. Then she took the whip and reins and lashed the mules on, whereon they set off, and their hoofs clattered on the road. They pulled without flagging, and carried not only Nausicaa and her wash of clothes, but the maids also who were with her.

When they reached the water side they went to the washing cisterns, through which there ran at all times enough pure water to wash any quantity of linen, no matter how dirty. Here they unharnessed the mules and turned them out to feed on the sweet juicy herbage that grew by the water side. They took the clothes out of the waggon, put them in the water, and vied with one another in treading them in the pits to get the dirt out.

After they had washed them and got them quite clean, they laid them out by the sea side, where the waves had raised a high beach of shingle, and set about washing themselves and anointing themselves with olive oil. Then they got their dinner by the side of the stream, and waited for the sun to finish drying the clothes. When they had done dinner they threw off the veils that covered their heads and began to play at ball, while Nausicaa sang for them. As the huntress Artemis goes forth upon the mountains of Taygetus or Erymanthus to hunt wild boars or deer, and the wood nymphs, daughters of Aegis-bearing Zeus, take their sport along with her (then is Leto proud at seeing her daughter stand a full head taller than the others, and eclipse the loveliest amid a whole bevy of beauties), even so did the girl outshine her handmaids.

When it was time for them to start home, and they were folding the clothes and putting them into the waggon, Athene began to consider how Odysseus should wake up and see the handsome girl who was to conduct him to the city of the Phaeacians. The girl, therefore, threw a ball at one of the maids, which missed her and fell into deep water. On this they all shouted, and the noise they made woke Odysseus, who sat up in his bed of leaves and began to wonder what it might all be.

"Alas," said he to himself, "what kind of people have I come amongst? Are they cruel, savage, and uncivilised, or hospitable and humane? I seem to hear the voices of young women, and they sound like those of the nymphs that haunt mountain tops, or springs of rivers and meadows of green grass. At any rate I am among a race of men and women. Let me try if I cannot manage to get a look at them."

As he said this he crept from under his bush, and broke off a bough covered with thick leaves to hide his nakedness. He looked like some lion of the wilderness that stalks about exulting in his strength and defying both wind and rain; his eyes glare as he prowls in quest of oxen, sheep, or deer, for he is famished, and will dare break even into a well fenced homestead, trying to get at the sheep – even such did Odysseus seem to the young women, as he drew near to them all naked as he was, for he was in great want. On seeing one so unkempt and so begrimed with salt water, the others scampered off along the spits that jutted out into the sea, but the daughter of Alcinous stood firm, for Athene put courage into her heart and took away all fear from her. She stood right in front of Odysseus, and he

doubted whether he should go up to her, throw himself at her feet, and embrace her knees as a suppliant, or stay where he was and entreat her to give him some clothes and show him the way to the town. In the end he deemed it best to entreat her from a distance in case the girl should take offence at his coming near enough to clasp her knees, so he addressed her in honeyed and persuasive language.

"O queen," he said, "I implore your aid – but tell me, are you a goddess or are you a mortal woman? If you are a goddess and dwell in heaven, I can only conjecture that you are Zeus's daughter Artemis, for your face and figure resemble none but hers; if on the other hand you are a mortal and live on earth, thrice happy are your father and mother – thrice happy, too, are your brothers and sisters; how proud and delighted they must feel when they see so fair a scion as yourself going out to a dance; most happy, however, of all will he be whose wedding gifts have been the richest, and who takes you to his own home. I never yet saw any one so beautiful, neither man nor woman, and am lost in admiration as I behold you. I can only compare you to a young palm tree which I saw when I was at Delos growing near the altar of Apollo – for I was there, too, with much people after me, when I was on that journey which has been the source of all my troubles. Never yet did such a young plant shoot out of the ground as that was, and I admired and wondered at it exactly as I now admire and wonder at yourself. I dare not clasp your knees, but I am in great distress; yesterday made the twentieth day that I had been tossing about upon the sea. The winds and waves have taken me all the way from the Ogygian island, and now fate has flung me upon this coast that I may endure still further suffering; for I do not think that I have yet come to the end of it, but rather that heaven has still much evil in store for me.

"And now, O queen, have pity upon me, for you are the first person I have met, and I know no one else in this country. Show me the way to your town, and let me have anything that you may have brought hither to wrap your clothes in. May heaven grant you in all things your heart's desire – husband, house, and a happy, peaceful home; for there is nothing better in this world than that man and wife should be of one mind in a house. It discomfits their enemies, makes the hearts of their friends glad, and they themselves know more about it than any one."

To this Nausicaa answered, “Stranger, you appear to be a sensible, well-disposed person. There is no accounting for luck; Zeus gives prosperity to rich and poor just as he chooses, so you must take what he has seen fit to send you, and make the best of it. Now, however, that you have come to this our country, you shall not want for clothes nor for anything else that a foreigner in distress may reasonably look for. I will show you the way to the town, and will tell you the name of our people; we are called Phaeacians, and I am daughter to Alcinous, in whom the whole power of the state is vested.”

Then she called her maids and said, “Stay where you are, you girls. Can you not see a man without running away from him? Do you take him for a robber or a murderer? Neither he nor any one else can come here to do us Phaeacians any harm, for we are dear to the gods, and live apart on a land’s end that juts into the sounding sea, and have nothing to do with any other people. This is only some poor man who has lost his way, and we must be kind to him, for strangers and foreigners in distress are under Zeus’s protection, and will take what they can get and be thankful; so, girls, give the poor fellow something to eat and drink, and wash him in the stream at some place that is sheltered from the wind.”

On this the maids left off running away and began calling one another back. They made Odysseus sit down in the shelter as Nausicaa had told them, and brought him a shirt and cloak. They also brought him the little golden cruse of oil, and told him to go and wash in the stream. But Odysseus said, “Young women, please to stand a little on one side that I may wash the brine from my shoulders and anoint myself with oil, for it is long enough since my skin has had a drop of oil upon it. I cannot wash as long as you all keep standing there. I am ashamed to strip before a number of good looking young women.”

Then they stood on one side and went to tell the girl, while Odysseus washed himself in the stream and scrubbed the brine from his back and from his broad shoulders. When he had thoroughly washed himself, and had got the brine out of his hair, he anointed himself with oil, and put on the clothes which the girl had given him; Athene then made him look taller and stronger than before, she also made the hair grow thick on the top of his head, and flow down in curls like hyacinth blossoms; she glorified him about the head and shoulders as a skilful workman who has

studied art of all kinds under Hephaestus and Athene enriches a piece of silver plate by gilding it – and his work is full of beauty. Then he went and sat down a little way off upon the beach, looking quite young and handsome, and the girl gazed on him with admiration; then she said to her maids:

"Hush, my dears, for I want to say something. I believe the gods who live in heaven have sent this man to the Phaeacians. When I first saw him I thought him plain, but now his appearance is like that of the gods who dwell in heaven. I should like my future husband to be just such another as he is, if he would only stay here and not want to go away. However, give him something to eat and drink."

They did as they were told, and set food before Odysseus, who ate and drank ravenously, for it was long since he had had food of any kind. Meanwhile, Nausicaa bethought her of another matter. She got the linen folded and placed in the waggon, she then yoked the mules, and, as she took her seat, she called Odysseus:

"Stranger," said she, "rise and let us be going back to the town; I will introduce you at the house of my excellent father, where I can tell you that you will meet all the best people among the Phaeacians. But be sure and do as I bid you, for you seem to be a sensible person. As long as we are going past the fields and farm lands, follow briskly behind the waggon along with the maids and I will lead the way myself. Presently, however, we shall come to the town, where you will find a high wall running all round it, and a good harbour on either side with a narrow entrance into the city, and the ships will be drawn up by the road side, for every one has a place where his own ship can lie. You will see the market place with a temple of Poseidon in the middle of it, and paved with large stones bedded in the earth. Here people deal in ship's gear of all kinds, such as cables and sails, and here, too, are the places where oars are made, for the Phaeacians are not a nation of archers; they know nothing about bows and arrows, but are a sea-faring folk, and pride themselves on their masts, oars, and ships, with which they travel far over the sea.

"I am afraid of the gossip and scandal that may be set on foot against me later on; for the people here are very ill-natured, and some low fellow, if he met us, might say, 'Who is this fine-looking stranger that is going about with Nausicaa? Where did she find him? I suppose she is going to marry

him. Perhaps he is a vagabond sailor whom she has taken from some foreign vessel, for we have no neighbours; or some god has at last come down from heaven in answer to her prayers, and she is going to live with him all the rest of her life. It would be a good thing if she would take herself off and find a husband somewhere else, for she will not look at one of the many excellent young Phaeacians who are in love with her.' This is the kind of disparaging remark that would be made about me, and I could not complain, for I should myself be scandalised at seeing any other girl do the like, and go about with men in spite of everybody, while her father and mother were still alive, and without having been married in the face of all the world.

"If, therefore, you want my father to give you an escort and to help you home, do as I bid you; you will see a beautiful grove of poplars by the road side dedicated to Athene; it has a well in it and a meadow all round it. Here my father has a field of rich garden ground, about as far from the town as a man's voice will carry. Sit down there and wait for a while till the rest of us can get into the town and reach my father's house. Then, when you think we must have done this, come into the town and ask the way to the house of my father Alcinous. You will have no difficulty in finding it; any child will point it out to you, for no one else in the whole town has anything like such a fine house as he has. When you have got past the gates and through the outer court, go right across the inner court till you come to my mother. You will find her sitting by the fire and spinning her purple wool by firelight. It is a fine sight to see her as she leans back against one of the bearing-posts with her maids all ranged behind her. Close to her seat stands that of my father, on which he sits and topes like an immortal god. Never mind him, but go up to my mother, and lay your hands upon her knees if you would get home quickly. If you can gain her over, you may hope to see your own country again, no matter how distant it may be."

So saying she lashed the mules with her whip and they left the river. The mules drew well, and their hoofs went up and down upon the road. She was careful not to go too fast for Odysseus and the maids who were following on foot along with the waggon, so she plied her whip with judgement. As the sun was going down they came to the sacred grove of Athene, and there Odysseus sat down and prayed to the mighty daughter of Zeus.

“Hear me,” he cried, “daughter of Aegis-bearing Zeus, unweariable, hear me now, for you gave no heed to my prayers when Poseidon was wrecking me. Now, therefore, have pity upon me and grant that I may find friends and be hospitably received by the Phaeacians.”

Thus did he pray, and Athene heard his prayer, but she would not show herself to him openly, for she was afraid of her uncle Poseidon, who was still furious in his endeavors to prevent Odysseus from getting home.

# Book 7

**THUS, THEN**, did Odysseus wait and pray; but the girl drove on to the town. When she reached her father’s house she drew up at the gateway, and her brothers – comely as the gods – gathered round her, took the mules out of the waggon, and carried the clothes into the house, while she went to her own room, where an old servant, Eurymedusa of Apeira, lit the fire for her. This old woman had been brought by sea from Apeira, and had been chosen as a prize for Alcinous because he was king over the Phaeacians, and the people obeyed him as though he were a god. She had been nurse to Nausicaa, and had now lit the fire for her, and brought her supper for her into her own room.

Presently Odysseus got up to go towards the town; and Athene shed a thick mist all round him to hide him in case any of the proud Phaeacians who met him should be rude to him, or ask him who he was. Then, as he was just entering the town, she came towards him in the likeness of a little girl carrying a pitcher. She stood right in front of him, and Odysseus said:

“My dear, will you be so kind as to show me the house of king Alcinous? I am an unfortunate foreigner in distress, and do not know one in your town and country.”

Then Athene said, “Yes, father stranger, I will show you the house you want, for Alcinous lives quite close to my own father. I will go before you and show the way, but say not a word as you go, and do not look at any man, nor ask him questions; for the people here cannot abide strangers, and do not like men who come from some other place. They are a sea-faring folk, and sail the seas by the grace of Poseidon in ships that glide along like thought, or as a bird in the air.”

On this she led the way, and Odysseus followed in her steps; but not one of the Phaeacians could see him as he passed through the city in the midst of them; for the great goddess Athene in her good will towards him had hidden him in a thick cloud of darkness. He admired their harbours, ships, places of assembly, and the lofty walls of the city, which, with the palisade on top of them, were very striking, and when they reached the king's house Athene said:

"This is the house, father stranger, which you would have me show you. You will find a number of great people sitting at table, but do not be afraid; go straight in, for the bolder a man is the more likely he is to carry his point, even though he is a stranger. First find the queen. Her name is Arete, and she comes of the same family as her husband Alcinous. They both descend originally from Poseidon, who was father to Nausithous by Periboea, a woman of great beauty. Periboea was the youngest daughter of Eurymedon, who at one time reigned over the giants, but he ruined his ill-fated people and lost his own life to boot.

"Poseidon, however, lay with his daughter, and she had a son by him, the great Nausithous, who reigned over the Phaeacians. Nausithous had two sons Rhexenor and Alcinous; Apollo killed the first of them while he was still a bridegroom and without male issue; but he left a daughter Arete, whom Alcinous married, and honours as no other woman is honoured of all those that keep house along with their husbands.

"Thus she both was, and still is, respected beyond measure by her children, by Alcinous himself, and by the whole people, who look upon her as a goddess, and greet her whenever she goes about the city, for she is a thoroughly good woman both in head and heart, and when any women are friends of hers, she will help their husbands also to settle their disputes. If you can gain her good will, you may have every hope of seeing your friends again, and getting safely back to your home and country."

Then Athene left Scheria and went away over the sea. She went to Marathon and to the spacious streets of Athens, where she entered the abode of Erechtheus; but Odysseus went on to the house of Alcinous, and he pondered much as he paused a while before reaching the threshold of bronze, for the splendour of the palace was like that of the sun or moon. The walls on either side were of bronze from end to end, and the cornice was of blue enamel. The doors were gold, and hung on pillars of silver that

rose from a floor of bronze, while the lintel was silver and the hook of the door was of gold.

On either side there stood gold and silver mastiffs which Hephaestus, with his consummate skill, had fashioned expressly to keep watch over the palace of king Alcinous; so they were immortal and could never grow old. Seats were ranged all along the wall, here and there from one end to the other, with coverings of fine woven work which the women of the house had made. Here the chief persons of the Phaeacians used to sit and eat and drink, for there was abundance at all seasons; and there were golden figures of young men with lighted torches in their hands, raised on pedestals, to give light by night to those who were at table. There are fifty maid servants in the house, some of whom are always grinding rich yellow grain at the mill, while others work at the loom, or sit and spin, and their shuttles go backwards and forwards like the fluttering of aspen leaves, while the linen is so closely woven that it will turn oil. As the Phaeacians are the best sailors in the world, so their women excel all others in weaving, for Athene has taught them all manner of useful arts, and they are very intelligent.

Outside the gate of the outer court there is a large garden of about four acres with a wall all round it. It is full of beautiful trees – pears, pomegranates, and the most delicious apples. There are luscious figs also, and olives in full growth. The fruits never rot nor fail all the year round, neither winter nor summer, for the air is so soft that a new crop ripens before the old has dropped. Pear grows on pear, apple on apple, and fig on fig, and so also with the grapes, for there is an excellent vineyard: on the level ground of a part of this, the grapes are being made into raisins; in another part they are being gathered; some are being trodden in the wine tubs, others further on have shed their blossom and are beginning to show fruit, others again are just changing colour. In the furthest part of the ground there are beautifully arranged beds of flowers that are in bloom all the year round. Two streams go through it, the one turned in ducts throughout the whole garden, while the other is carried under the ground of the outer court to the house itself, and the town’s people draw water from it. Such, then, were the splendours with which the gods had endowed the house of king Alcinous.

So here Odysseus stood for a while and looked about him, but when he had looked long enough he crossed the threshold and went within the precincts of the house. There he found all the chief people among the Phaeacians making their drink offerings to Hermes, which they always did the last thing before going away for the night. He went straight through the court, still hidden by the cloak of darkness in which Athene had enveloped him, till he reached Arete and King Alcinous; then he laid his hands upon the knees of the queen, and at that moment the miraculous darkness fell away from him and he became visible. Every one was speechless with surprise at seeing a man there, but Odysseus began at once with his petition.

"Queen Arete," he exclaimed, "daughter of great Rhexenor, in my distress I humbly pray you, as also your husband and these your guests (whom may heaven prosper with long life and happiness, and may they leave their possessions to their children, and all the honours conferred upon them by the state) to help me home to my own country as soon as possible; for I have been long in trouble and away from my friends."

Then he sat down on the hearth among the ashes and they all held their peace, till presently the old hero Echeneus, who was an excellent speaker and an elder among the Phaeacians, plainly and in all honesty addressed them thus:

"Alcinous," said he, "it is not creditable to you that a stranger should be seen sitting among the ashes of your hearth; every one is waiting to hear what you are about to say; tell him, then, to rise and take a seat on a stool inlaid with silver, and bid your servants mix some wine and water that we may make a drink offering to Zeus the lord of thunder, who takes all well disposed suppliants under his protection; and let the housekeeper give him some supper, of whatever there may be in the house."

When Alcinous heard this he took Odysseus by the hand, raised him from the hearth, and bade him take the seat of Laodamas, who had been sitting beside him, and was his favourite son. A maid servant then brought him water in a beautiful golden ewer and poured it into a silver basin for him to wash his hands, and she drew a clean table beside him; an upper servant brought him bread and offered him many good things of what there was in the house, and Odysseus ate and drank. Then Alcinous said to one of the servants, "Pontonous, mix a cup of wine and hand it round that we may

make drink-offerings to Zeus the lord of thunder, who is the protector of all well-disposed suppliants."

Pontonous then mixed wine and water, and handed it round after giving every man his drink-offering. When they had made their offerings, and had drunk each as much as he was minded, Alcinous said:

"Aldermen and town councillors of the Phaeacians, hear my words. You have had your supper, so now go home to bed. Tomorrow morning I shall invite a still larger number of aldermen, and will give a sacrificial banquet in honour of our guest; we can then discuss the question of his escort, and consider how we may at once send him back rejoicing to his own country without trouble or inconvenience to himself, no matter how distant it may be. We must see that he comes to no harm while on his homeward journey, but when he is once at home he will have to take the luck he was born with for better or worse like other people. It is possible, however, that the stranger is one of the immortals who has come down from heaven to visit us; but in this case the gods are departing from their usual practice, for hitherto they have made themselves perfectly clear to us when we have been offering them hecatombs. They come and sit at our feasts just like one of our selves, and if any solitary wayfarer happens to stumble upon some one or other of them, they affect no concealment, for we are as near of kin to the gods as the Cyclopes and the savage giants are."

Then Odysseus said: "Pray, Alcinous, do not take any such notion into your head. I have nothing of the immortal about me, neither in body nor mind, and most resemble those among you who are the most afflicted. Indeed, were I to tell you all that heaven has seen fit to lay upon me, you would say that I was still worse off than they are. Nevertheless, let me sup in spite of sorrow, for an empty stomach is a very importunate thing, and thrusts itself on a man's notice no matter how dire is his distress. I am in great trouble, yet it insists that I shall eat and drink, bids me lay aside all memory of my sorrows and dwell only on the due replenishing of itself. As for yourselves, do as you propose, and at break of day set about helping me to get home. I shall be content to die if I may first once more behold my property, my bondsmen, and all the greatness of my house."

Thus did he speak. Every one approved his saying, and agreed that he should have his escort inasmuch as he had spoken reasonably. Then when they had made their drink offerings, and had drunk each as much as he was

minded they went home to bed every man in his own abode, leaving Odysseus in the cloister with Arete and Alcinous while the servants were taking the things away after supper. Arete was the first to speak, for she recognised the shirt, cloak, and good clothes that Odysseus was wearing, as the work of herself and of her maids; so she said, “Stranger, before we go any further, there is a question I should like to ask you. Who, and whence are you, and who gave you those clothes? Did you not say you had come here from beyond the sea?”

And Odysseus answered, “It would be a long story Madam, were I to relate in full the tale of my misfortunes, for the hand of heaven has been laid heavy upon me; but as regards your question, there is an island far away in the sea which is called ‘the Ogygian.’ Here dwells the cunning and powerful goddess Calypso, daughter of Atlas. She lives by herself far from all neighbours human or divine. Fortune, however, brought me to her hearth all desolate and alone, for Zeus struck my ship with his thunderbolts, and broke it up in mid-ocean. My brave comrades were drowned every man of them, but I stuck to the keel and was carried hither and thither for the space of nine days, till at last during the darkness of the tenth night the gods brought me to the Ogygian island where the great goddess Calypso lives. She took me in and treated me with the utmost kindness; indeed she wanted to make me immortal that I might never grow old, but she could not persuade me to let her do so.

“I stayed with Calypso seven years straight on end, and watered the good clothes she gave me with my tears during the whole time; but at last when the eighth year came round she bade me depart of her own free will, either because Zeus had told her she must, or because she had changed her mind. She sent me from her island on a raft, which she provisioned with abundance of bread and wine. Moreover she gave me good stout clothing, and sent me a wind that blew both warm and fair. Days seven and ten did I sail over the sea, and on the eighteenth I caught sight of the first outlines of the mountains upon your coast – and glad indeed was I to set eyes upon them. Nevertheless there was still much trouble in store for me, for at this point Poseidon would let me go no further, and raised a great storm against me; the sea was so terribly high that I could no longer keep to my raft, which went to pieces under the fury of the gale, and I had to swim for it, till wind and current brought me to your shores.

“There I tried to land, but could not, for it was a bad place and the waves dashed me against the rocks, so I again took to the sea and swam on till I came to a river that seemed the most likely landing place, for there were no rocks and it was sheltered from the wind. Here, then, I got out of the water and gathered my senses together again. Night was coming on, so I left the river, and went into a thicket, where I covered myself all over with leaves, and presently heaven sent me off into a very deep sleep. Sick and sorry as I was I slept among the leaves all night, and through the next day till afternoon, when I woke as the sun was westering, and saw your daughter’s maid servants playing upon the beach, and your daughter among them looking like a goddess. I besought her aid, and she proved to be of an excellent disposition, much more so than could be expected from so young a person – for young people are apt to be thoughtless. She gave me plenty of bread and wine, and when she had had me washed in the river she also gave me the clothes in which you see me. Now, therefore, though it has pained me to do so, I have told you the whole truth.”

Then Alcinous said, “Stranger, it was very wrong of my daughter not to bring you on at once to my house along with the maids, seeing that she was the first person whose aid you asked.”

“Pray do not scold her,” replied Odysseus; “she is not to blame. She did tell me to follow along with the maids, but I was ashamed and afraid, for I thought you might perhaps be displeased if you saw me. Every human being is sometimes a little suspicious and irritable.”

“Stranger,” replied Alcinous, “I am not the kind of man to get angry about nothing; it is always better to be reasonable; but by Father Zeus, Athene, and Apollo, now that I see what kind of person you are, and how much you think as I do, I wish you would stay here, marry my daughter, and become my son-in-law. If you will stay I will give you a house and an estate, but no one (heaven forbid) shall keep you here against your own wish, and that you may be sure of this I will attend tomorrow to the matter of your escort. You can sleep during the whole voyage if you like, and the men shall sail you over smooth waters either to your own home, or wherever you please, even though it be a long way further off than Euboea, which those of my people who saw it when they took yellow-haired Rhadamanthus to see Tityus the son of Gaea, tell me is the furthest of any place – and yet they did the whole voyage in a single day without

distressing themselves, and came back again afterwards. You will thus see how much my ships excel all others, and what magnificent oarsmen my sailors are."

Then was Odysseus glad and prayed aloud saying, "Father Zeus, grant that Alcinous may do all as he has said, for so he will win an imperishable name among mankind, and at the same time I shall return to my country."

Thus did they converse. Then Arete told her maids to set a bed in the room that was in the gatehouse, and make it with good red rugs, and to spread coverlets on the top of them with woollen cloaks for Odysseus to wear. The maids thereon went out with torches in their hands, and when they had made the bed they came up to Odysseus and said, "Rise, sir stranger, and come with us for your bed is ready," and glad indeed was he to go to his rest.

So Odysseus slept in a bed placed in a room over the echoing gateway; but Alcinous lay in the inner part of the house, with the queen his wife by his side.

# Book 8

**NOW WHEN** the child of morning, rosy-fingered Dawn, appeared, Alcinous and Odysseus both rose, and Alcinous led the way to the Phaeacian place of assembly, which was near the ships. When they got there they sat down side by side on a seat of polished stone, while Athene took the form of one of Alcinous' servants, and went round the town in order to help Odysseus to get home. She went up to the citizens, man by man, and said, "Aldermen and town councillors of the Phaeacians, come to the assembly all of you and listen to the stranger who has just come off a long voyage to the house of King Alcinous; he looks like an immortal god."

With these words she made them all want to come, and they flocked to the assembly till seats and standing room were alike crowded. Every one was struck with the appearance of Odysseus, for Athene had beautified him about the head and shoulders, making him look taller and stouter than he really was, that he might impress the Phaeacians favourably as being a very remarkable man, and might come off well in the many trials of skill

to which they would challenge him. Then, when they were got together, Alcinous spoke:

"Hear me," said he, "aldermen and town councillors of the Phaeacians, that I may speak even as I am minded. This stranger, whoever he may be, has found his way to my house from somewhere or other either East or West. He wants an escort and wishes to have the matter settled. Let us then get one ready for him, as we have done for others before him; indeed, no one who ever yet came to my house has been able to complain of me for not speeding on his way soon enough. Let us draw a ship into the sea – one that has never yet made a voyage – and man her with two and fifty of our smartest young sailors. Then when you have made fast your oars each by his own seat, leave the ship and come to my house to prepare a feast. I will find you in everything. I am giving these instructions to the young men who will form the crew, for as regards you aldermen and town councillors, you will join me in entertaining our guest in the cloisters. I can take no excuses, and we will have Demodocus to sing to us; for there is no bard like him whatever he may choose to sing about."

Alcinous then led the way, and the others followed after, while a servant went to fetch Demodocus. The fifty-two picked oarsmen went to the sea shore as they had been told, and when they got there they drew the ship into the water, got her mast and sails inside her, bound the oars to the thole-pins with twisted thongs of leather, all in due course, and spread the white sails aloft. They moored the vessel a little way out from land, and then came on shore and went to the house of King Alcinous. The out houses, yards, and all the precincts were filled with crowds of men in great multitudes both old and young; and Alcinous killed them a dozen sheep, eight full grown pigs, and two oxen. These they skinned and dressed so as to provide a magnificent banquet.

A servant presently led in the famous bard Demodocus, whom the muse had dearly loved, but to whom she had given both good and evil, for though she had endowed him with a divine gift of song, she had robbed him of his eyesight. Pontonous set a seat for him among the guests, leaning it up against a bearing-post. He hung the lyre for him on a peg over his head, and showed him where he was to feel for it with his hands. He also set a fair table with a basket of victuals by his side, and a cup of wine from which he might drink whenever he was so disposed.

The company then laid their hands upon the good things that were before them, but as soon as they had had enough to eat and drink, the muse inspired Demodocus to sing the feats of heroes, and more especially a matter that was then in the mouths of all men, to wit, the quarrel between Odysseus and Achilles, and the fierce words that they heaped on one another as they sat together at a banquet. But Agamemnon was glad when he heard his chieftains quarrelling with one another, for Apollo had foretold him this at Pytho when he crossed the stone floor to consult the oracle. Here was the beginning of the evil that by the will of Zeus fell both upon Danaans and Trojans.

Thus sang the bard, but Odysseus drew his purple mantle over his head and covered his face, for he was ashamed to let the Phaeacians see that he was weeping. When the bard left off singing he wiped the tears from his eyes, uncovered his face, and, taking his cup, made a drink-offering to the gods; but when the Phaeacians pressed Demodocus to sing further, for they delighted in his lays, then Odysseus again drew his mantle over his head and wept bitterly. No one noticed his distress except Alcinous, who was sitting near him, and heard the heavy sighs that he was heaving. So he at once said, “Aldermen and town councillors of the Phaeacians, we have had enough now, both of the feast, and of the minstrelsy that is its due accompaniment; let us proceed therefore to the athletic sports, so that our guest on his return home may be able to tell his friends how much we surpass all other nations as boxers, wrestlers, jumpers, and runners.”

With these words he led the way, and the others followed after. A servant hung Demodocus’ lyre on its peg for him, led him out of the cloister, and set him on the same way as that along which all the chief men of the Phaeacians were going to see the sports; a crowd of several thousands of people followed them, and there were many excellent competitors for all the prizes. Acroneos, Ocyalus, Elatreus, Nauteus, Prymneus, Anchialus, Eretmeus, Ponteus, Proreus, Thoon, Anabesineus, and Amphialus son of Polyneus son of Tecton. There was also Euryalus son of Naubolus, who was like Ares himself, and was the best looking man among the Phaeacians except Laodamas. Three sons of Alcinous, Laodamas, Halios, and Clytoneus, competed also.

The foot races came first. The course was set out for them from the starting post, and they raised a dust upon the plain as they all flew forward

at the same moment. Clytoneus came in first by a long way; he left every one else behind him by the length of the furrow that a couple of mules can plough in a fallow field. They then turned to the painful art of wrestling, and here Euryalus proved to be the best man. Amphialus excelled all the others in jumping, while at throwing the disc there was no one who could approach Elatreus. Alcinous' son Laodamas was the best boxer, and he it was who presently said, when they had all been diverted with the games, "Let us ask the stranger whether he excels in any of these sports; he seems very powerfully built; his thighs, calves, hands, and neck are of prodigious strength, nor is he at all old, but he has suffered much lately, and there is nothing like the sea for making havoc with a man, no matter how strong he is."

"You are quite right, Laodamas," replied Euryalus, "go up to your guest and speak to him about it yourself."

When Laodamas heard this he made his way into the middle of the crowd and said to Odysseus, "I hope, Sir, that you will enter yourself for some one or other of our competitions if you are skilled in any of them – and you must have gone in for many a one before now. There is nothing that does any one so much credit all his life long as the showing himself a proper man with his hands and feet. Have a try therefore at something, and banish all sorrow from your mind. Your return home will not be long delayed, for the ship is already drawn into the water, and the crew is found."

Odysseus answered, "Laodamas, why do you taunt me in this way? my mind is set rather on cares than contests; I have been through infinite trouble, and am come among you now as a suppliant, praying your king and people to further me on my return home."

Then Euryalus reviled him outright and said, "I gather, then, that you are unskilled in any of the many sports that men generally delight in. I suppose you are one of those grasping traders that go about in ships as captains or merchants, and who think of nothing but of their outward freights and homeward cargoes. There does not seem to be much of the athlete about you."

"For shame, Sir," answered Odysseus, fiercely, "you are an insolent fellow – so true is it that the gods do not grace all men alike in speech, person, and understanding. One man may be of weak presence, but heaven

has adorned this with such a good conversation that he charms every one who sees him; his honeyed moderation carries his hearers with him so that he is leader in all assemblies of his fellows, and wherever he goes he is looked up to. Another may be as handsome as a god, but his good looks are not crowned with discretion. This is your case. No god could make a finer looking fellow than you are, but you are a fool. Your ill-judged remarks have made me exceedingly angry, and you are quite mistaken, for I excel in a great many athletic exercises; indeed, so long as I had youth and strength, I was among the first athletes of the age. Now, however, I am worn out by labour and sorrow, for I have gone through much both on the field of battle and by the waves of the weary sea; still, in spite of all this I will compete, for your taunts have stung me to the quick."

So he hurried up without even taking his cloak off, and seized a disc, larger, more massive and much heavier than those used by the Phaeacians when disc-throwing among themselves. Then, swinging it back, he threw it from his brawny hand, and it made a humming sound in the air as he did so. The Phaeacians quailed beneath the rushing of its flight as it sped gracefully from his hand, and flew beyond any mark that had been made yet. Athene, in the form of a man, came and marked the place where it had fallen. "A blind man, Sir," said she, "could easily tell your mark by groping for it – it is so far ahead of any other. You may make your mind easy about this contest, for no Phaeacian can come near to such a throw as yours."

Odysseus was glad when he found he had a friend among the lookers-on, so he began to speak more pleasantly. "Young men," said he, "come up to that throw if you can, and I will throw another disc as heavy or even heavier. If anyone wants to have a bout with me let him come on, for I am exceedingly angry; I will box, wrestle, or run, I do not care what it is, with any man of you all except Laodamas, but not with him because I am his guest, and one cannot compete with one's own personal friend. At least I do not think it a prudent or a sensible thing for a guest to challenge his host's family at any game, especially when he is in a foreign country. He will cut the ground from under his own feet if he does; but I make no exception as regards any one else, for I want to have the matter out and know which is the best man. I am a good hand at every kind of athletic sport known among mankind. I am an excellent archer. In battle I am

always the first to bring a man down with my arrow, no matter how many more are taking aim at him alongside of me. Philoctetes was the only man who could shoot better than I could when we Achaeans were before Troy and in practice. I far excel every one else in the whole world, of those who still eat bread upon the face of the earth, but I should not like to shoot against the mighty dead, such as Heracles, or Eurytus the Oechalian – men who could shoot against the gods themselves. This in fact was how Eurytus came prematurely by his end, for Apollo was angry with him and killed him because he challenged him as an archer. I can throw a dart farther than any one else can shoot an arrow. Running is the only point in respect of which I am afraid some of the Phaeacians might beat me, for I have been brought down very low at sea; my provisions ran short, and therefore I am still weak."

They all held their peace except King Alcinous, who began, "Sir, we have had much pleasure in hearing all that you have told us, from which I understand that you are willing to show your prowess, as having been displeased with some insolent remarks that have been made to you by one of our athletes, and which could never have been uttered by any one who knows how to talk with propriety. I hope you will apprehend my meaning, and will explain to any one of your chief men who may be dining with yourself and your family when you get home, that we have an hereditary aptitude for accomplishments of all kinds. We are not particularly remarkable for our boxing, nor yet as wrestlers, but we are singularly fleet of foot and are excellent sailors. We are extremely fond of good dinners, music, and dancing; we also like frequent changes of linen, warm baths, and good beds, so now, please, some of you who are the best dancers set about dancing, that our guest on his return home may be able to tell his friends how much we surpass all other nations as sailors, runners, dancers, and minstrels. Demodocus has left his lyre at my house, so run some one or other of you and fetch it for him."

On this a servant hurried off to bring the lyre from the king's house, and the nine men who had been chosen as stewards stood forward. It was their business to manage everything connected with the sports, so they made the ground smooth and marked a wide space for the dancers. Presently the servant came back with Demodocus' lyre, and he took his place in the midst of them, whereon the best young dancers in the town began to foot

and trip it so nimbly that Odysseus was delighted with the merry twinkling of their feet.

Meanwhile the bard began to sing the loves of Ares and Aphrodite, and how they first began their intrigue in the house of Hephaestus. Ares made Aphrodite many presents, and defiled King Hephaestus's marriage bed, so the sun, who saw what they were about, told Hephaestus. Hephaestus was very angry when he heard such dreadful news, so he went to his smithy brooding mischief, got his great anvil into its place, and began to forge some chains which none could either unloose or break, so that they might stay there in that place. When he had finished his snare he went into his bedroom and festooned the bed-posts all over with chains like cobwebs; he also let many hang down from the great beam of the ceiling. Not even a god could see them so fine and subtle were they. As soon as he had spread the chains all over the bed, he made as though he were setting out for the fair state of Lemnos, which of all places in the world was the one he was most fond of. But Ares kept no blind look out, and as soon as he saw him start, hurried off to his house, burning with love for Aphrodite.

Now Aphrodite was just come in from a visit to her father Zeus, and was about sitting down when Ares came inside the house, and said as he took her hand in his own, "Let us go to the couch of Hephaestus: he is not at home, but is gone off to Lemnos among the Sintians, whose speech is barbarous."

She was nothing loth, so they went to the couch to take their rest, whereon they were caught in the toils which cunning Hephaestus had spread for them, and could neither get up nor stir hand or foot, but found too late that they were in a trap. Then Hephaestus came up to them, for he had turned back before reaching Lemnos, when his scout the sun told him what was going on. He was in a furious passion, and stood in the vestibule making a dreadful noise as he shouted to all the gods.

"Father Zeus," he cried, "and all you other blessed gods who live for ever, come here and see the ridiculous and disgraceful sight that I will show you. Zeus's daughter Aphrodite is always dishonouring me because I am lame. She is in love with Ares, who is handsome and clean built, whereas I am a cripple – but my parents are to blame for that, not I; they ought never to have begotten me. Come and see the pair together asleep on my bed. It makes me furious to look at them. They are very fond of one

another, but I do not think they will lie there longer than they can help, nor do I think that they will sleep much; there, however, they shall stay till her father has repaid me the sum I gave him for his baggage of a daughter, who is fair but not honest."

On this the gods gathered to the house of Hephaestus. Earth-encircling Poseidon came, and Hermes the bringer of luck, and King Apollo, but the goddesses staid at home all of them for shame. Then the givers of all good things stood in the doorway, and the blessed gods roared with inextinguishable laughter, as they saw how cunning Hephaestus had been, whereon one would turn towards his neighbour saying:

"Ill deeds do not prosper, and the weak confound the strong. See how limping Hephaestus, lame as he is, has caught Ares who is the fleetest god in heaven; and now Ares will be cast in heavy damages."

Thus did they converse, but King Apollo said to Hermes, "Messenger Hermes, giver of good things, you would not care how strong the chains were, would you, if you could sleep with Aphrodite?"

"King Apollo," answered Hermes, "I only wish I might get the chance, though there were three times as many chains – and you might look on, all of you, gods and goddesses, but I would sleep with her if I could."

The immortal gods burst out laughing as they heard him, but Poseidon took it all seriously, and kept on imploring Hephaestus to set Ares free again. "Let him go," he cried, "and I will undertake, as you require, that he shall pay you all the damages that are held reasonable among the immortal gods."

"Do not," replied Hephaestus, "ask me to do this; a bad man's bond is bad security; what remedy could I enforce against you if Ares should go away and leave his debts behind him along with his chains?"

"Hephaestus," said Poseidon, "if Ares goes away without paying his damages, I will pay you myself." So Hephaestus answered, "In this case I cannot and must not refuse you."

Thereon he loosed the bonds that bound them, and as soon as they were free they scampered off, Ares to Thrace and laughter-loving Aphrodite to Cyprus and to Paphos, where is her grove and her altar fragrant with burnt offerings. Here the Graces bathed her, and anointed her with oil of ambrosia such as the immortal gods make use of, and they clothed her in raiment of the most enchanting beauty.

Thus sang the bard, and both Odysseus and the seafaring Phaeacians were charmed as they heard him.

Then Alcinous told Laodamas and Halius to dance alone, for there was no one to compete with them. So they took a red ball which Polybus had made for them, and one of them bent himself backwards and threw it up towards the clouds, while the other jumped from off the ground and caught it with ease before it came down again. When they had done throwing the ball straight up into the air they began to dance, and at the same time kept on throwing it backwards and forwards to one another, while all the young men in the ring applauded and made a great stamping with their feet. Then Odysseus said:

"King Alcinous, you said your people were the nimblest dancers in the world, and indeed they have proved themselves to be so. I was astonished as I saw them."

The king was delighted at this, and exclaimed to the Phaeacians, "Aldermen and town councillors, our guest seems to be a person of singular judgement; let us give him such proof of our hospitality as he may reasonably expect. There are twelve chief men among you, and counting myself there are thirteen; contribute, each of you, a clean cloak, a shirt, and a talent of fine gold; let us give him all this in a lump down at once, so that when he gets his supper he may do so with a light heart. As for Euryalus he will have to make a formal apology and a present too, for he has been rude."

Thus did he speak. The others all of them applauded his saying, and sent their servants to fetch the presents. Then Euryalus said, "King Alcinous, I will give the stranger all the satisfaction you require. He shall have my sword, which is of bronze, all but the hilt, which is of silver. I will also give him the scabbard of newly sawn ivory into which it fits. It will be worth a great deal to him."

As he spoke he placed the sword in the hands of Odysseus and said, "Good luck to you, father stranger; if anything has been said amiss may the winds blow it away with them, and may heaven grant you a safe return, for I understand you have been long away from home, and have gone through much hardship."

To which Odysseus answered, "Good luck to you too my friend, and may the gods grant you every happiness. I hope you will not miss the sword

you have given me along with your apology."

With these words he girded the sword about his shoulders and towards sundown the presents began to make their appearance, as the servants of the donors kept bringing them to the house of King Alcinous; here his sons received them, and placed them under their mother's charge. Then Alcinous led the way to the house and bade his guests take their seats.

"Wife," said he, turning to Queen Arete, "Go, fetch the best chest we have, and put a clean cloak and shirt in it. Also, set a copper on the fire and heat some water; our guest will take a warm bath; see also to the careful packing of the presents that the noble Phaeacians have made him; he will thus better enjoy both his supper and the singing that will follow. I shall myself give him this golden goblet – which is of exquisite workmanship – that he may be reminded of me for the rest of his life whenever he makes a drink offering to Zeus, or to any of the gods."

Then Arete told her maids to set a large tripod upon the fire as fast as they could, whereon they set a tripod full of bath water on to a clear fire; they threw on sticks to make it blaze, and the water became hot as the flame played about the belly of the tripod. Meanwhile Arete brought a magnificent chest from her own room, and inside it she packed all the beautiful presents of gold and raiment which the Phaeacians had brought. Lastly she added a cloak and a good shirt from Alcinous, and said to Odysseus:

"See to the lid yourself, and have the whole bound round at once, for fear any one should rob you by the way when you are asleep in your ship."

When Odysseus heard this he put the lid on the chest and made it fast with a bond that Circe had taught him. He had done so before an upper servant told him to come to the bath and wash himself. He was very glad of a warm bath, for he had had no one to wait upon him ever since he left the house of Calypso, who as long as he remained with her had taken as good care of him as though he had been a god. When the servants had done washing and anointing him with oil, and had given him a clean cloak and shirt, he left the bath room and joined the guests who were sitting over their wine. Lovely Nausicaa stood by one of the bearing-posts supporting the roof of the cloister, and admired him as she saw him pass. "Farewell stranger," said she, "do not forget me when you are safe at home again, for it is to me first that you owe a ransom for having saved your life."

And Odysseus said, “Nausicaa, daughter of great Alcinous, may Zeus the mighty husband of Hera, grant that I may reach my home; so shall I bless you as my guardian angel all my days, for it was you who saved me.”

When he had said this, he seated himself beside Alcinous. Supper was then served, and the wine was mixed for drinking. A servant led in the favourite bard Demodocus, and set him in the midst of the company, near one of the bearing-posts supporting the cloister, that he might lean against it. Then Odysseus cut off a piece of roast pork with plenty of fat (for there was abundance left on the joint) and said to a servant, “Take this piece of pork over to Demodocus and tell him to eat it; for all the pain his lays may cause me I will salute him none the less; bards are honoured and respected throughout the world, for the muse teaches them their songs and loves them.”

The servant carried the pork in his fingers over to Demodocus, who took it and was very much pleased. They then laid their hands on the good things that were before them, and as soon as they had had to eat and drink, Odysseus said to Demodocus, “Demodocus, there is no one in the world whom I admire more than I do you. You must have studied under the Muse, Zeus’s daughter, and under Apollo, so accurately do you sing the return of the Achaeans with all their sufferings and adventures. If you were not there yourself, you must have heard it all from some one who was. Now, however, change your song and tell us of the wooden horse which Epeus made with the assistance of Athene, and which Odysseus got by stratagem into the fort of Troy after freighting it with the men who afterwards sacked the city. If you will sing this tale aright I will tell all the world how magnificently heaven has endowed you.”

The bard inspired of heaven took up the story at the point where some of the Argives set fire to their tents and sailed away while others, hidden within the horse, were waiting with Odysseus in the Trojan place of assembly. For the Trojans themselves had drawn the horse into their fortress, and it stood there while they sat in council round it, and were in three minds as to what they should do. Some were for breaking it up then and there; others would have it dragged to the top of the rock on which the fortress stood, and then thrown down the precipice; while yet others were for letting it remain as an offering and propitiation for the gods. And this was how they settled it in the end, for the city was doomed when it took in

that horse, within which were all the bravest of the Argives waiting to bring death and destruction on the Trojans. Anon he sang how the sons of the Achaeans issued from the horse, and sacked the town, breaking out from their ambuscade. He sang how they overran the city hither and thither and ravaged it, and how Odysseus went raging like Ares along with Menelaus to the house of Deiphobus. It was there that the fight raged most furiously, nevertheless by Athene's help he was victorious.

All this he told, but Odysseus was overcome as he heard him, and his cheeks were wet with tears. He wept as a woman weeps when she throws herself on the body of her husband who has fallen before his own city and people, fighting bravely in defence of his home and children. She screams aloud and flings her arms about him as he lies gasping for breath and dying, but her enemies beat her from behind about the back and shoulders, and carry her off into slavery, to a life of labour and sorrow, and the beauty fades from her cheeks – even so piteously did Odysseus weep, but none of those present perceived his tears except Alcinous, who was sitting near him, and could hear the sobs and sighs that he was heaving. The king, therefore, at once rose and said:

"Aldermen and town councillors of the Phaeacians, let Demodocus cease his song, for there are those present who do not seem to like it. From the moment that we had done supper and Demodocus began to sing, our guest has been all the time groaning and lamenting. He is evidently in great trouble, so let the bard leave off, that we may all enjoy ourselves, hosts and guest alike. This will be much more as it should be, for all these festivities, with the escort and the presents that we are making with so much good will are wholly in his honour, and any one with even a moderate amount of right feeling knows that he ought to treat a guest and a suppliant as though he were his own brother.

"Therefore, Sir, do you on your part affect no more concealment nor reserve in the matter about which I shall ask you; it will be more polite in you to give me a plain answer; tell me the name by which your father and mother over yonder used to call you, and by which you were known among your neighbours and fellow-citizens. There is no one, neither rich nor poor, who is absolutely without any name whatever, for people's fathers and mothers give them names as soon as they are born. Tell me also your country, nation, and city, that our ships may shape their purpose

accordingly and take you there. For the Phaeacians have no pilots; their vessels have no rudders as those of other nations have, but the ships themselves understand what it is that we are thinking about and want; they know all the cities and countries in the whole world, and can traverse the sea just as well even when it is covered with mist and cloud, so that there is no danger of being wrecked or coming to any harm. Still I do remember hearing my father say that Poseidon was angry with us for being too easy-going in the matter of giving people escorts. He said that one of these days he should wreck a ship of ours as it was returning from having escorted some one, and bury our city under a high mountain. This is what my father used to say, but whether the god will carry out his threat or no is a matter which he will decide for himself.

"And now, tell me and tell me true. Where have you been wandering, and in what countries have you travelled? Tell us of the peoples themselves, and of their cities – who were hostile, savage and uncivilised, and who, on the other hand, hospitable and humane. Tell us also why you are made so unhappy on hearing about the return of the Argive Danaans from Troy. The gods arranged all this, and sent them their misfortunes in order that future generations might have something to sing about. Did you lose some brave kinsman of your wife's when you were before Troy? a son-in-law or father-in-law – which are the nearest relations a man has outside his own flesh and blood? or was it some brave and kindly-natured comrade – for a good friend is as dear to a man as his own brother?"

# Book 9

**AND ODYSSEUS ANSWERED**, "King Alcinous, it is a good thing to hear a bard with such a divine voice as this man has. There is nothing better or more delightful than when a whole people make merry together, with the guests sitting orderly to listen, while the table is loaded with bread and meats, and the cup-bearer draws wine and fills his cup for every man. This is indeed as fair a sight as a man can see. Now, however, since you are inclined to ask the story of my sorrows, and rekindle my own sad memories in respect of them, I do not know how to begin, nor yet how to continue and conclude my tale, for the hand of heaven has been laid heavily upon me.

“Firstly, then, I will tell you my name that you too may know it, and one day, if I outlive this time of sorrow, may become my guests though I live so far away from all of you. I am Odysseus son of Laertes, renowned among mankind for all manner of subtlety, so that my fame ascends to heaven. I live in Ithaca, where there is a high mountain called Neritum, covered with forests; and not far from it there is a group of islands very near to one another – Dulichium, Same, and the wooded island of Zacynthus. It lies squat on the horizon, all highest up in the sea towards the sunset, while the others lie away from it towards dawn. It is a rugged island, but it breeds brave men, and my eyes know none that they better love to look upon. The goddess Calypso kept me with her in her cave, and wanted me to marry her, as did also the cunning Aeaean goddess Circe; but they could neither of them persuade me, for there is nothing dearer to a man than his own country and his parents, and however splendid a home he may have in a foreign country, if it be far from father or mother, he does not care about it. Now, however, I will tell you of the many hazardous adventures which by Zeus’s will I met with on my return from Troy.

* * *

“When I had set sail thence the wind took me first to Ismarus, which is the city of the Cicons. There I sacked the town and put the people to the sword. We took their wives and also much booty, which we divided equitably amongst us, so that none might have reason to complain. I then said that we had better make off at once, but my men very foolishly would not obey me, so they staid there drinking much wine and killing great numbers of sheep and oxen on the sea shore. Meanwhile the Cicons cried out for help to other Cicons who lived inland. These were more in number, and stronger, and they were more skilled in the art of war, for they could fight, either from chariots or on foot as the occasion served; in the morning, therefore, they came as thick as leaves and bloom in summer, and the hand of heaven was against us, so that we were hard pressed. They set the battle in array near the ships, and the hosts aimed their bronze-shod spears at one another. So long as the day waxed and it was still morning, we held our own against them, though they were more in number than we; but as the sun went down, towards the time when men loose their oxen, the Cicons got the better of us, and we lost half a dozen men from every ship

we had; so we got away with those that were left.

"Thence we sailed onward with sorrow in our hearts, but glad to have escaped death though we had lost our comrades, nor did we leave till we had thrice invoked each one of the poor fellows who had perished by the hands of the Cicons. Then Zeus raised the North wind against us till it blew a hurricane, so that land and sky were hidden in thick clouds, and night sprang forth out of the heavens. We let the ships run before the gale, but the force of the wind tore our sails to tatters, so we took them down for fear of shipwreck, and rowed our hardest towards the land. There we lay two days and two nights suffering much alike from toil and distress of mind, but on the morning of the third day we again raised our masts, set sail, and took our places, letting the wind and steersmen direct our ship. I should have got home at that time unharmed had not the North wind and the currents been against me as I was doubling Cape Malea, and set me off my course hard by the island of Cythera.

"I was driven thence by foul winds for a space of nine days upon the sea, but on the tenth day we reached the land of the Lotus-eaters, who live on a food that comes from a kind of flower. Here we landed to take in fresh water, and our crews got their mid-day meal on the shore near the ships. When they had eaten and drunk I sent two of my company to see what manner of men the people of the place might be, and they had a third man under them. They started at once, and went about among the Lotus-eaters, who did them no hurt, but gave them to eat of the lotus, which was so delicious that those who ate of it left off caring about home, and did not even want to go back and say what had happened to them, but were for staying and munching lotus with the Lotus-eaters without thinking further of their return; nevertheless, though they wept bitterly I forced them back to the ships and made them fast under the benches. Then I told the rest to go on board at once, lest any of them should taste of the lotus and leave off wanting to get home, so they took their places and smote the grey sea with their oars.

"We sailed hence, always in much distress, till we came to the land of the lawless and inhuman Cyclopes. Now the Cyclopes neither plant nor plough, but trust in providence, and live on such wheat, barley, and grapes as grow wild without any kind of tillage, and their wild grapes yield them wine as the sun and the rain may grow them. They have no laws nor

assemblies of the people, but live in caves on the tops of high mountains; each is lord and master in his family, and they take no account of their neighbours.

"Now off their harbour there lies a wooded and fertile island not quite close to the land of the Cyclopes, but still not far. It is over-run with wild goats, that breed there in great numbers and are never disturbed by foot of man; for sportsmen – who as a rule will suffer so much hardship in forest or among mountain precipices – do not go there, nor yet again is it ever ploughed or fed down, but it lies a wilderness untilled and unsown from year to year, and has no living thing upon it but only goats. For the Cyclopes have no ships, nor yet shipwrights who could make ships for them; they cannot therefore go from city to city, or sail over the sea to one another's country as people who have ships can do; if they had had these they would have colonised the island, for it is a very good one, and would yield everything in due season. There are meadows that in some places come right down to the sea shore, well watered and full of luscious grass; grapes would do there excellently; there is level land for ploughing, and it would always yield heavily at harvest time, for the soil is deep. There is a good harbour where no cables are wanted, nor yet anchors, nor need a ship be moored, but all one has to do is to beach one's vessel and stay there till the wind becomes fair for putting out to sea again. At the head of the harbour there is a spring of clear water coming out of a cave, and there are poplars growing all round it.

"Here we entered, but so dark was the night that some god must have brought us in, for there was nothing whatever to be seen. A thick mist hung all round our ships; the moon was hidden behind a mass of clouds so that no one could have seen the island if he had looked for it, nor were there any breakers to tell us we were close in shore before we found ourselves upon the land itself; when, however, we had beached the ships, we took down the sails, went ashore and camped upon the beach till daybreak.

"When the child of morning, rosy-fingered Dawn appeared, we admired the island and wandered all over it, while the nymphs Zeus's daughters roused the wild goats that we might get some meat for our dinner. On this we fetched our spears and bows and arrows from the ships, and dividing ourselves into three bands began to shoot the goats. Heaven sent us

excellent sport; I had twelve ships with me, and each ship got nine goats, while my own ship had ten; thus through the livelong day to the going down of the sun we ate and drank our fill, and we had plenty of wine left, for each one of us had taken many jars full when we sacked the city of the Cicons, and this had not yet run out. While we were feasting we kept turning our eyes towards the land of the Cyclopes, which was hard by, and saw the smoke of their stubble fires. We could almost fancy we heard their voices and the bleating of their sheep and goats, but when the sun went down and it came on dark, we camped down upon the beach, and next morning I called a council.

"'Stay here, my brave fellows,' said I, 'all the rest of you, while I go with my ship and exploit these people myself: I want to see if they are uncivilised savages, or a hospitable and humane race.'

"I went on board, bidding my men to do so also and loose the hawsers; so they took their places and smote the grey sea with their oars. When we got to the land, which was not far, there, on the face of a cliff near the sea, we saw a great cave overhung with laurels. It was a station for a great many sheep and goats, and outside there was a large yard, with a high wall round it made of stones built into the ground and of trees both pine and oak. This was the abode of a huge monster who was then away from home shepherding his flocks. He would have nothing to do with other people, but led the life of an outlaw. He was a horrid creature, not like a human being at all, but resembling rather some crag that stands out boldly against the sky on the top of a high mountain.

"I told my men to draw the ship ashore, and stay where they were, all but the twelve best among them, who were to go along with myself. I also took a goatskin of sweet black wine which had been given me by Maron, son of Euanthes, who was priest of Apollo the patron god of Ismarus, and lived within the wooded precincts of the temple. When we were sacking the city we respected him, and spared his life, as also his wife and child; so he made me some presents of great value – seven talents of fine gold, and a bowl of silver, with twelve jars of sweet wine, unblended, and of the most exquisite flavour. Not a man nor maid in the house knew about it, but only himself, his wife, and one housekeeper: when he drank it he mixed twenty parts of water to one of wine, and yet the fragrance from the mixing-bowl was so exquisite that it was impossible to refrain from drinking. I filled a

large skin with this wine, and took a wallet full of provisions with me, for my mind misgave me that I might have to deal with some savage who would be of great strength, and would respect neither right nor law.

"We soon reached his cave, but he was out shepherding, so we went inside and took stock of all that we could see. His cheese-racks were loaded with cheeses, and he had more lambs and kids than his pens could hold. They were kept in separate flocks; first there were the hoggets, then the oldest of the younger lambs and lastly the very young ones all kept apart from one another; as for his dairy, all the vessels, bowls, and milk pails into which he milked, were swimming with whey. When they saw all this, my men begged me to let them first steal some cheeses, and make off with them to the ship; they would then return, drive down the lambs and kids, put them on board and sail away with them. It would have been indeed better if we had done so but I would not listen to them, for I wanted to see the owner himself, in the hope that he might give me a present. When, however, we saw him my poor men found him ill to deal with.

"We lit a fire, offered some of the cheeses in sacrifice, ate others of them, and then sat waiting till the Cyclops should come in with his sheep. When he came, he brought in with him a huge load of dry firewood to light the fire for his supper, and this he flung with such a noise on to the floor of his cave that we hid ourselves for fear at the far end of the cavern. Meanwhile he drove all the ewes inside, as well as the she-goats that he was going to milk, leaving the males, both rams and he-goats, outside in the yards. Then he rolled a huge stone to the mouth of the cave – so huge that two and twenty strong four-wheeled waggons would not be enough to draw it from its place against the doorway. When he had so done he sat down and milked his ewes and goats, all in due course, and then let each of them have her own young. He curdled half the milk and set it aside in wicker strainers, but the other half he poured into bowls that he might drink it for his supper. When he had got through with all his work, he lit the fire, and then caught sight of us, whereon he said:

"'Strangers, who are you? Where do sail from? Are you traders, or do you sail the sea as rovers, with your hands against every man, and every man's hand against you?'

"We were frightened out of our senses by his loud voice and monstrous form, but I managed to say, 'We are Achaeans on our way home from

Troy, but by the will of Zeus, and stress of weather, we have been driven far out of our course. We are the people of Agamemnon, son of Atreus, who has won infinite renown throughout the whole world, by sacking so great a city and killing so many people. We therefore humbly pray you to show us some hospitality, and otherwise make us such presents as visitors may reasonably expect. May your excellency fear the wrath of heaven, for we are your suppliants, and Zeus takes all respectable travellers under his protection, for he is the avenger of all suppliants and foreigners in distress.'

"To this he gave me but a pitiless answer, 'Stranger,' said he, 'you are a fool, or else you know nothing of this country. Talk to me, indeed, about fearing the gods or shunning their anger? We Cyclopes do not care about Zeus or any of your blessed gods, for we are ever so much stronger than they. I shall not spare either yourself or your companions out of any regard for Zeus, unless I am in the humour for doing so. And now tell me where you made your ship fast when you came on shore. Was it round the point, or is she lying straight off the land?'

"He said this to draw me out, but I was too cunning to be caught in that way, so I answered with a lie; 'Poseidon,' said I, 'sent my ship on to the rocks at the far end of your country, and wrecked it. We were driven on to them from the open sea, but I and those who are with me escaped the jaws of death.'

"The cruel wretch vouchsafed me not one word of answer, but with a sudden clutch he gripped up two of my men at once and dashed them down upon the ground as though they had been puppies. Their brains were shed upon the ground, and the earth was wet with their blood. Then he tore them limb from limb and supped upon them. He gobbled them up like a lion in the wilderness, flesh, bones, marrow, and entrails, without leaving anything uneaten. As for us, we wept and lifted up our hands to heaven on seeing such a horrid sight, for we did not know what else to do; but when the Cyclops had filled his huge paunch, and had washed down his meal of human flesh with a drink of neat milk, he stretched himself full length upon the ground among his sheep, and went to sleep. I was at first inclined to seize my sword, draw it, and drive it into his vitals, but I reflected that if I did we should all certainly be lost, for we should never be able to shift

the stone which the monster had put in front of the door. So we stayed sobbing and sighing where we were till morning came.

"When the child of morning, rosy-fingered dawn, appeared, he again lit his fire, milked his goats and ewes, all quite rightly, and then let each have her own young one; as soon as he had got through with all his work, he clutched up two more of my men, and began eating them for his morning's meal. Presently, with the utmost ease, he rolled the stone away from the door and drove out his sheep, but he at once put it back again – as easily as though he were merely clapping the lid on to a quiver full of arrows. As soon as he had done so he shouted, and cried 'Shoo, shoo,' after his sheep to drive them on to the mountain; so I was left to scheme some way of taking my revenge and covering myself with glory.

"In the end I deemed it would be the best plan to do as follows: The Cyclops had a great club which was lying near one of the sheep pens; it was of green olive wood, and he had cut it intending to use it for a staff as soon as it should be dry. It was so huge that we could only compare it to the mast of a twenty-oared merchant vessel of large burden, and able to venture out into open sea. I went up to this club and cut off about six feet of it; I then gave this piece to the men and told them to fine it evenly off at one end, which they proceeded to do, and lastly I brought it to a point myself, charring the end in the fire to make it harder. When I had done this I hid it under dung, which was lying about all over the cave, and told the men to cast lots which of them should venture along with myself to lift it and bore it into the monster's eye while he was asleep. The lot fell upon the very four whom I should have chosen, and I myself made five. In the evening the wretch came back from shepherding, and drove his flocks into the cave – this time driving them all inside, and not leaving any in the yards; I suppose some fancy must have taken him, or a god must have prompted him to do so. As soon as he had put the stone back to its place against the door, he sat down, milked his ewes and his goats all quite rightly, and then let each have her own young one; when he had got through with all this work, he gripped up two more of my men, and made his supper off them. So I went up to him with an ivy-wood bowl of black wine in my hands:

"'Look here, Cyclops,' said I, you have been eating a great deal of man's flesh, so take this and drink some wine, that you may see what kind of

liquor we had on board my ship. I was bringing it to you as a drink-offering, in the hope that you would take compassion upon me and further me on my way home, whereas all you do is to go on ramping and raving most intolerably. You ought to be ashamed of yourself; how can you expect people to come see you any more if you treat them in this way?'

"He then took the cup and drank. He was so delighted with the taste of the wine that he begged me for another bowl full. 'Be so kind,' he said, 'as to give me some more, and tell me your name at once. I want to make you a present that you will be glad to have. We have wine even in this country, for our soil grows grapes and the sun ripens them, but this drinks like Nectar and Ambrosia all in one.'

"I then gave him some more; three times did I fill the bowl for him, and three times did he drain it without thought or heed; then, when I saw that the wine had got into his head, I said to him as plausibly as I could: 'Cyclops, you ask my name and I will tell it you; give me, therefore, the present you promised me; my name is Noman; this is what my father and mother and my friends have always called me.'

"But the cruel wretch said, 'Then I will eat all Noman's comrades before Noman himself, and will keep Noman for the last. This is the present that I will make him.'

"As he spoke he reeled, and fell sprawling face upwards on the ground. His great neck hung heavily backwards and a deep sleep took hold upon him. Presently he turned sick, and threw up both wine and the gobbets of human flesh on which he had been gorging, for he was very drunk. Then I thrust the beam of wood far into the embers to heat it, and encouraged my men lest any of them should turn faint-hearted. When the wood, green though it was, was about to blaze, I drew it out of the fire glowing with heat, and my men gathered round me, for heaven had filled their hearts with courage. We drove the sharp end of the beam into the monster's eye, and bearing upon it with all my weight I kept turning it round and round as though I were boring a hole in a ship's plank with an auger, which two men with a wheel and strap can keep on turning as long as they choose. Even thus did we bore the red hot beam into his eye, till the boiling blood bubbled all over it as we worked it round and round, so that the steam from the burning eyeball scalded his eyelids and eyebrows, and the roots of the eye sputtered in the fire. As a blacksmith plunges an axe or hatchet

into cold water to temper it – for it is this that gives strength to the iron – and it makes a great hiss as he does so, even thus did the Cyclops' eye hiss round the beam of olive wood, and his hideous yells made the cave ring again. We ran away in a fright, but he plucked the beam all besmirched with gore from his eye, and hurled it from him in a frenzy of rage and pain, shouting as he did so to the other Cyclopes who lived on the bleak headlands near him; so they gathered from all quarters round his cave when they heard him crying, and asked what was the matter with him.

"'What ails you, Polyphemus,' said they, 'that you make such a noise, breaking the stillness of the night, and preventing us from being able to sleep? Surely no man is carrying off your sheep? Surely no man is trying to kill you either by fraud or by force?'

"But Polyphemus shouted to them from inside the cave, 'Noman is killing me by fraud; no man is killing me by force.'

"'Then,' said they, 'if no man is attacking you, you must be ill; when Zeus makes people ill, there is no help for it, and you had better pray to your father Poseidon.'

"Then they went away, and I laughed inwardly at the success of my clever stratagem, but the Cyclops, groaning and in an agony of pain, felt about with his hands till he found the stone and took it from the door; then he sat in the doorway and stretched his hands in front of it to catch anyone going out with the sheep, for he thought I might be foolish enough to attempt this.

"As for myself I kept on puzzling to think how I could best save my own life and those of my companions; I schemed and schemed, as one who knows that his life depends upon it, for the danger was very great. In the end I deemed that this plan would be the best; the male sheep were well grown, and carried a heavy black fleece, so I bound them noiselessly in threes together, with some of the withies on which the wicked monster used to sleep. There was to be a man under the middle sheep, and the two on either side were to cover him, so that there were three sheep to each man. As for myself there was a ram finer than any of the others, so I caught hold of him by the back, ensconced myself in the thick wool under his belly, and hung on patiently to his fleece, face upwards, keeping a firm hold on it all the time.

“Thus, then, did we wait in great fear of mind till morning came, but when the child of morning, rosy-fingered Dawn, appeared, the male sheep hurried out to feed, while the ewes remained bleating about the pens waiting to be milked, for their udders were full to bursting; but their master in spite of all his pain felt the backs of all the sheep as they stood upright, without being sharp enough to find out that the men were underneath their bellies. As the ram was going out, last of all, heavy with its fleece and with the weight of my crafty self, Polyphemus laid hold of it and said:

“‘My good ram, what is it that makes you the last to leave my cave this morning? You are not wont to let the ewes go before you, but lead the mob with a run whether to flowery mead or bubbling fountain, and are the first to come home again at night; but now you lag last of all. Is it because you know your master has lost his eye, and are sorry because that wicked Noman and his horrid crew has got him down in his drink and blinded him? But I will have his life yet. If you could understand and talk, you would tell me where the wretch is hiding, and I would dash his brains upon the ground till they flew all over the cave. I should thus have some satisfaction for the harm this no-good Noman has done me.’

“As he spoke he drove the ram outside, but when we were a little way out from the cave and yards, I first got from under the ram’s belly, and then freed my comrades; as for the sheep, which were very fat, by constantly heading them in the right direction we managed to drive them down to the ship. The crew rejoiced greatly at seeing those of us who had escaped death, but wept for the others whom the Cyclops had killed. However, I made signs to them by nodding and frowning that they were to hush their crying, and told them to get all the sheep on board at once and put out to sea; so they went aboard, took their places, and smote the grey sea with their oars. Then, when I had got as far out as my voice would reach, I began to jeer at the Cyclops.

“‘Cyclops,’ said I, ‘you should have taken better measure of your man before eating up his comrades in your cave. You wretch, eat up your visitors in your own house? You might have known that your sin would find you out, and now Zeus and the other gods have punished you.’

“He got more and more furious as he heard me, so he tore the top from off a high mountain, and flung it just in front of my ship so that it was

within a little of hitting the end of the rudder. The sea quaked as the rock fell into it, and the wash of the wave it raised carried us back towards the mainland, and forced us towards the shore. But I snatched up a long pole and kept the ship off, making signs to my men by nodding my head, that they must row for their lives, whereon they laid out with a will. When we had got twice as far as we were before, I was for jeering at the Cyclops again, but the men begged and prayed of me to hold my tongue.

"'Do not,' they exclaimed, 'be mad enough to provoke this savage creature further; he has thrown one rock at us already which drove us back again to the mainland, and we made sure it had been the death of us; if he had then heard any further sound of voices he would have pounded our heads and our ship's timbers into a jelly with the rugged rocks he would have heaved at us, for he can throw them a long way.'

"But I would not listen to them, and shouted out to him in my rage, 'Cyclops, if any one asks you who it was that put your eye out and spoiled your beauty, say it was the valiant warrior Odysseus, son of Laertes, who lives in Ithaca.'

"On this he groaned, and cried out, 'Alas, alas, then the old prophecy about me is coming true. There was a prophet here, at one time, a man both brave and of great stature, Telemus son of Eurymus, who was an excellent seer, and did all the prophesying for the Cyclopes till he grew old; he told me that all this would happen to me some day, and said I should lose my sight by the hand of Odysseus. I have been all along expecting some one of imposing presence and superhuman strength, whereas he turns out to be a little insignificant weakling, who has managed to blind my eye by taking advantage of me in my drink; come here, then, Odysseus, that I may make you presents to show my hospitality, and urge Poseidon to help you forward on your journey – for Poseidon and I are father and son. He, if he so will, shall heal me, which no one else neither god nor man can do.'

"Then I said, 'I wish I could be as sure of killing you outright and sending you down to the house of Hades, as I am that it will take more than Poseidon to cure that eye of yours.'

"On this he lifted up his hands to the firmament of heaven and prayed, saying, 'Hear me, great Poseidon; if I am indeed your own true begotten son, grant that Odysseus may never reach his home alive; or if he must get

back to his friends at last, let him do so late and in sore plight after losing all his men let him reach his home in another man's ship and find trouble in his house.'

"Thus did he pray, and Poseidon heard his prayer. Then he picked up a rock much larger than the first, swung it aloft and hurled it with prodigious force. It fell just short of the ship, but was within a little of hitting the end of the rudder. The sea quaked as the rock fell into it, and the wash of the wave it raised drove us onwards on our way towards the shore of the island.

"When at last we got to the island where we had left the rest of our ships, we found our comrades lamenting us, and anxiously awaiting our return. We ran our vessel upon the sands and got out of her on to the sea shore; we also landed the Cyclops' sheep, and divided them equitably amongst us so that none might have reason to complain. As for the ram, my companions agreed that I should have it as an extra share; so I sacrificed it on the sea shore, and burned its thigh bones to Zeus, who is the lord of all. But he heeded not my sacrifice, and only thought how he might destroy both my ships and my comrades.

"Thus through the livelong day to the going down of the sun we feasted our fill on meat and drink, but when the sun went down and it came on dark, we camped upon the beach. When the child of morning rosy-fingered Dawn appeared, I bade my men on board and loose the hawsers. Then they took their places and smote the grey sea with their oars; so we sailed on with sorrow in our hearts, but glad to have escaped death though we had lost our comrades.

# Book 10

**"THENCE WE WENT** on to the Aeolian island where lives Aeolus son of Hippotas, dear to the immortal gods. It is an island that floats (as it were) upon the sea, iron bound with a wall that girds it. Now, Aeolus has six daughters and six lusty sons, so he made the sons marry the daughters, and they all live with their dear father and mother, feasting and enjoying every conceivable kind of luxury. All day long the atmosphere of the house is loaded with the savour of roasting meats till it groans again, yard and all; but by night they sleep on their well made bedsteads, each with his own

wife between the blankets. These were the people among whom we had now come.

"Aeolus entertained me for a whole month asking me questions all the time about Troy, the Argive fleet, and the return of the Achaeans. I told him exactly how everything had happened, and when I said I must go, and asked him to further me on my way, he made no sort of difficulty, but set about doing so at once. Moreover, he flayed me a prime ox-hide to hold the ways of the roaring winds, which he shut up in the hide as in a sack – for Zeus had made him captain over the winds, and he could stir or still each one of them according to his own pleasure. He put the sack in the ship and bound the mouth so tightly with a silver thread that not even a breath of a side-wind could blow from any quarter. The West wind which was fair for us did he alone let blow as it chose; but it all came to nothing, for we were lost through our own folly.

"Nine days and nine nights did we sail, and on the tenth day our native land showed on the horizon. We got so close in that we could see the stubble fires burning, and I, being then dead beat, fell into a light sleep, for I had never let the rudder out of my own hands, that we might get home the faster. On this the men fell to talking among themselves, and said I was bringing back gold and silver in the sack that Aeolus had given me. 'Bless my heart,' would one turn to his neighbour, saying, 'how this man gets honoured and makes friends to whatever city or country he may go. See what fine prizes he is taking home from Troy, while we, who have travelled just as far as he has, come back with hands as empty as we set out with – and now Aeolus has given him ever so much more. Quick – let us see what it all is, and how much gold and silver there is in the sack he gave him.'

"Thus they talked and evil counsels prevailed. They loosed the sack, whereupon the wind flew howling forth and raised a storm that carried us weeping out to sea and away from our own country. Then I awoke, and knew not whether to throw myself into the sea or to live on and make the best of it; but I bore it, covered myself up, and lay down in the ship, while the men lamented bitterly as the fierce winds bore our fleet back to the Aeolian island.

"When we reached it we went ashore to take in water, and dined hard by the ships. Immediately after dinner I took a herald and one of my men and

went straight to the house of Aeolus, where I found him feasting with his wife and family; so we sat down as suppliants on the threshold. They were astounded when they saw us and said, ‘Odysseus, what brings you here? What god has been ill-treating you? We took great pains to further you on your way home to Ithaca, or wherever it was that you wanted to go to.’

“Thus did they speak, but I answered sorrowfully, ‘My men have undone me; they, and cruel sleep, have ruined me. My friends, mend me this mischief, for you can if you will.’

“I spoke as movingly as I could, but they said nothing, till their father answered, ‘Vilest of mankind, get you gone at once out of the island; him whom heaven hates will I in no wise help. Be off, for you come here as one abhorred of heaven.’ And with these words he sent me sorrowing from his door.

“Thence we sailed sadly on till the men were worn out with long and fruitless rowing, for there was no longer any wind to help them. Six days, night and day did we toil, and on the seventh day we reached the rocky stronghold of Lamus – Telepylus, the city of the Laestrygonians, where the shepherd who is driving in his sheep and goats to be milked salutes him who is driving out his flock to feed and this last answers the salute. In that country a man who could do without sleep might earn double wages, one as a herdsman of cattle, and another as a shepherd, for they work much the same by night as they do by day.

“When we reached the harbour we found it land-locked under steep cliffs, with a narrow entrance between two headlands. My captains took all their ships inside, and made them fast close to one another, for there was never so much as a breath of wind inside, but it was always dead calm. I kept my own ship outside, and moored it to a rock at the very end of the point; then I climbed a high rock to reconnoitre, but could see no sign neither of man nor cattle, only some smoke rising from the ground. So I sent two of my company with an attendant to find out what sort of people the inhabitants were.

“The men when they got on shore followed a level road by which the people draw their firewood from the mountains into the town, till presently they met a young woman who had come outside to fetch water, and who was daughter to a Laestrygonian named Antiphates. She was going to the fountain Artacia from which the people bring in their water,

and when my men had come close up to her, they asked her who the king of that country might be, and over what kind of people he ruled; so she directed them to her father's house, but when they got there they found his wife to be a giantess as huge as a mountain, and they were horrified at the sight of her.

"She at once called her husband Antiphates from the place of assembly, and forthwith he set about killing my men. He snatched up one of them, and began to make his dinner off him then and there, whereon the other two ran back to the ships as fast as ever they could. But Antiphates raised a hue-and-cry after them, and thousands of sturdy Laestrygonians sprang up from every quarter – ogres, not men. They threw vast rocks at us from the cliffs as though they had been mere stones, and I heard the horrid sound of the ships crunching up against one another, and the death cries of my men, as the Laestrygonians speared them like fishes and took them home to eat them. While they were thus killing my men within the harbour I drew my sword, cut the cable of my own ship, and told my men to row with all their might if they too would not fare like the rest; so they laid out for their lives, and we were thankful enough when we got into open water out of reach of the rocks they hurled at us. As for the others there was not one of them left.

"Thence we sailed sadly on, glad to have escaped death, though we had lost our comrades, and came to the Aeaean island, where Circe lives – a great and cunning goddess who is own sister to the magician Aeetes – for they are both children of the sun by Perse, who is daughter to Oceanus. We brought our ship into a safe harbour without a word, for some god guided us thither, and having landed we lay there for two days and two nights, worn out in body and mind. When the morning of the third day came I took my spear and my sword, and went away from the ship to reconnoitre, and see if I could discover signs of human handiwork, or hear the sound of voices. Climbing to the top of a high look-out I espied the smoke of Circe's house rising upwards amid a dense forest of trees, and when I saw this I doubted whether, having seen the smoke, I would not go on at once and find out more, but in the end I deemed it best to go back to the ship, give the men their dinners, and send some of them instead of going myself.

“When I had nearly got back to the ship some god took pity upon my solitude, and sent a fine antlered stag right into the middle of my path. He was coming down his pasture in the forest to drink of the river, for the heat of the sun drove him, and as he passed I struck him in the middle of the back; the bronze point of the spear went clean through him, and he lay groaning in the dust until the life went out of him. Then I set my foot upon him, drew my spear from the wound, and laid it down; I also gathered rough grass and rushes and twisted them into a fathom or so of good stout rope, with which I bound the four feet of the noble creature together; having so done I hung him round my neck and walked back to the ship leaning upon my spear, for the stag was much too big for me to be able to carry him on my shoulder, steadying him with one hand. As I threw him down in front of the ship, I called the men and spoke cheeringly man by man to each of them. ‘Look here my friends,’ said I, ‘we are not going to die so much before our time after all, and at any rate we will not starve so long as we have got something to eat and drink on board.’ On this they uncovered their heads upon the sea shore and admired the stag, for he was indeed a splendid fellow. Then, when they had feasted their eyes upon him sufficiently, they washed their hands and began to cook him for dinner.

“Thus through the livelong day to the going down of the sun we stayed there eating and drinking our fill, but when the sun went down and it came on dark, we camped upon the sea shore. When the child of morning, rosy-fingered Dawn, appeared, I called a council and said, ‘My friends, we are in very great difficulties; listen therefore to me. We have no idea where the sun either sets or rises, so that we do not even know East from West. I see no way out of it; nevertheless, we must try and find one. We are certainly on an island, for I went as high as I could this morning, and saw the sea reaching all round it to the horizon; it lies low, but towards the middle I saw smoke rising from out of a thick forest of trees.’

“Their hearts sank as they heard me, for they remembered how they had been treated by the Laestrygonian Antiphates, and by the savage ogre Polyphemus. They wept bitterly in their dismay, but there was nothing to be got by crying, so I divided them into two companies and set a captain over each; I gave one company to Eurylochus, while I took command of the other myself. Then we cast lots in a helmet, and the lot fell upon

Eurylochus; so he set out with his twenty-two men, and they wept, as also did we who were left behind.

"When they reached Circe's house they found it built of cut stones, on a site that could be seen from far, in the middle of the forest. There were wild mountain wolves and lions prowling all round it – poor bewitched creatures whom she had tamed by her enchantments and drugged into subjection. They did not attack my men, but wagged their great tails, fawned upon them, and rubbed their noses lovingly against them. As hounds crowd round their master when they see him coming from dinner – for they know he will bring them something – even so did these wolves and lions with their great claws fawn upon my men, but the men were terribly frightened at seeing such strange creatures. Presently they reached the gates of the goddess' house, and as they stood there they could hear Circe within, singing most beautifully as she worked at her loom, making a web so fine, so soft, and of such dazzling colours as no one but a goddess could weave. On this Polites, whom I valued and trusted more than any other of my men, said, 'There is some one inside working at a loom and singing most beautifully; the whole place resounds with it, let us call her and see whether she is woman or goddess.'

"They called her and she came down, unfastened the door, and bade them enter. They, thinking no evil, followed her, all except Eurylochus, who suspected mischief and staid outside. When she had got them into her house, she set them upon benches and seats and mixed them a mess with cheese, honey, meal, and Pramnian wine, but she drugged it with wicked poisons to make them forget their homes, and when they had drunk she turned them into pigs by a stroke of her wand, and shut them up in her pig-styes. They were like pigs – head, hair, and all, and they grunted just as pigs do; but their senses were the same as before, and they remembered everything.

"Thus then were they shut up squealing, and Circe threw them some acorns and beech masts such as pigs eat, but Eurylochus hurried back to tell me about the sad fate of our comrades. He was so overcome with dismay that though he tried to speak he could find no words to do so; his eyes filled with tears and he could only sob and sigh, till at last we forced his story out of him, and he told us what had happened to the others.

“‘We went,’ said he, ‘as you told us, through the forest, and in the middle of it there was a fine house built with cut stones in a place that could be seen from far. There we found a woman, or else she was a goddess, working at her loom and singing sweetly; so the men shouted to her and called her, whereon she at once came down, opened the door, and invited us in. The others did not suspect any mischief so they followed her into the house, but I staid where I was, for I thought there might be some treachery. From that moment I saw them no more, for not one of them ever came out, though I sat a long time watching for them.’

“Then I took my sword of bronze and slung it over my shoulders; I also took my bow, and told Eurylochus to come back with me and shew me the way. But he laid hold of me with both his hands and spoke piteously, saying, ‘Sir, do not force me to go with you, but let me stay here, for I know you will not bring one of them back with you, nor even return alive yourself; let us rather see if we cannot escape at any rate with the few that are left us, for we may still save our lives.’

“‘Stay where you are, then,’ answered I, ‘eating and drinking at the ship, but I must go, for I am most urgently bound to do so.’

“With this I left the ship and went up inland. When I got through the charmed grove, and was near the great house of the enchantress Circe, I met Hermes with his golden wand, disguised as a young man in the hey-day of his youth and beauty with the down just coming upon his face. He came up to me and took my hand within his own, saying, ‘My poor unhappy man, whither are you going over this mountain top, alone and without knowing the way? Your men are shut up in Circe’s pigstyes, like so many wild boars in their lairs. You surely do not fancy that you can set them free? I can tell you that you will never get back and will have to stay there with the rest of them. But never mind, I will protect you and get you out of your difficulty. Take this herb, which is one of great virtue, and keep it about you when you go to Circe’s house, it will be a talisman to you against every kind of mischief.

“‘And I will tell you of all the wicked witchcraft that Circe will try to practice upon you. She will mix a mess for you to drink, and she will drug the meal with which she makes it, but she will not be able to charm you, for the virtue of the herb that I shall give you will prevent her spells from working. I will tell you all about it. When Circe strikes you with her wand,

draw your sword and spring upon her as though you were going to kill her. She will then be frightened, and will desire you to go to bed with her; on this you must not point blank refuse her, for you want her to set your companions free, and to take good care also of yourself, but you must make her swear solemnly by all the blessed gods that she will plot no further mischief against you, or else when she has got you naked she will unman you and make you fit for nothing.'

"As he spoke he pulled the herb out of the ground and shewed me what it was like. The root was black, while the flower was as white as milk; the gods call it Moly, and mortal men cannot uproot it, but the gods can do whatever they like.

"Then Hermes went back to high Olympus passing over the wooded island; but I fared onward to the house of Circe, and my heart was clouded with care as I walked along. When I got to the gates I stood there and called the goddess, and as soon as she heard me she came down, opened the door, and asked me to come in; so I followed her – much troubled in my mind. She set me on a richly decorated seat inlaid with silver, there was a footstool also under my feet, and she mixed a mess in a golden goblet for me to drink; but she drugged it, for she meant me mischief. When she had given it me, and I had drunk it without its charming me, she struck me with her wand. 'There now,' she cried, 'be off to the pigstye, and make your lair with the rest of them.'

"But I rushed at her with my sword drawn as though I would kill her, whereon she fell with a loud scream, clasped my knees, and spoke piteously, saying, 'Who and whence are you? from what place and people have you come? How can it be that my drugs have no power to charm you? Never yet was any man able to stand so much as a taste of the herb I gave you; you must be spell-proof; surely you can be none other than the bold hero Odysseus, who Hermes always said would come here some day with his ship while on his way home from Troy; so be it then; sheathe your sword and let us go to bed, that we may make friends and learn to trust each other.'

"And I answered, 'Circe, how can you expect me to be friendly with you when you have just been turning all my men into pigs? And now that you have got me here myself, you mean me mischief when you ask me to go to bed with you, and will unman me and make me fit for nothing. I shall

certainly not consent to go to bed with you unless you will first take your solemn oath to plot no further harm against me.'

"So she swore at once as I had told her, and when she had completed her oath then I went to bed with her.

"Meanwhile her four servants, who are her housemaids, set about their work. They are the children of the groves and fountains, and of the holy waters that run down into the sea. One of them spread a fair purple cloth over a seat, and laid a carpet underneath it. Another brought tables of silver up to the seats, and set them with baskets of gold. A third mixed some sweet wine with water in a silver bowl and put golden cups upon the tables, while the fourth brought in water and set it to boil in a large cauldron over a good fire which she had lighted. When the water in the cauldron was boiling, she poured cold into it till it was just as I liked it, and then she set me in a bath and began washing me from the cauldron about the head and shoulders, to take the tire and stiffness out of my limbs. As soon as she had done washing me and anointing me with oil, she arrayed me in a good cloak and shirt and led me to a richly decorated seat inlaid with silver; there was a footstool also under my feet. A maid servant then brought me water in a beautiful golden ewer and poured it into a silver basin for me to wash my hands, and she drew a clean table beside me; an upper servant brought me bread and offered me many things of what there was in the house, and then Circe bade me eat, but I would not, and sat without heeding what was before me, still moody and suspicious.

"When Circe saw me sitting there without eating, and in great grief, she came to me and said, 'Odysseus, why do you sit like that as though you were dumb, gnawing at your own heart, and refusing both meat and drink? Is it that you are still suspicious? You ought not to be, for I have already sworn solemnly that I will not hurt you.'

"And I said, 'Circe, no man with any sense of what is right can think of either eating or drinking in your house until you have set his friends free and let him see them. If you want me to eat and drink, you must free my men and bring them to me that I may see them with my own eyes.'

"When I had said this she went straight through the court with her wand in her hand and opened the pigstye doors. My men came out like so many prime hogs and stood looking at her, but she went about among them and anointed each with a second drug, whereon the bristles that the bad drug

had given them fell off, and they became men again, younger than they were before, and much taller and better looking. They knew me at once, seized me each of them by the hand, and wept for joy till the whole house was filled with the sound of their halloa-ballooing, and Circe herself was so sorry for them that she came up to me and said, ‘Odysseus, noble son of Laertes, go back at once to the sea where you have left your ship, and first draw it on to the land. Then, hide all your ship’s gear and property in some cave, and come back here with your men.’

“I agreed to this, so I went back to the sea shore, and found the men at the ship weeping and wailing most piteously. When they saw me the silly blubbering fellows began frisking round me as calves break out and gambol round their mothers, when they see them coming home to be milked after they have been feeding all day, and the homestead resounds with their lowing. They seemed as glad to see me as though they had got back to their own rugged Ithaca, where they had been born and bred. ‘Sir,’ said the affectionate creatures, ‘we are as glad to see you back as though we had got safe home to Ithaca; but tell us all about the fate of our comrades.’

“I spoke comfortingly to them and said, ‘We must draw our ship on to the land, and hide the ship’s gear with all our property in some cave; then come with me all of you as fast as you can to Circe’s house, where you will find your comrades eating and drinking in the midst of great abundance.’

“On this the men would have come with me at once, but Eurylochus tried to hold them back and said, ‘Alas, poor wretches that we are, what will become of us? Rush not on your ruin by going to the house of Circe, who will turn us all into pigs or wolves or lions, and we shall have to keep guard over her house. Remember how the Cyclops treated us when our comrades went inside his cave, and Odysseus with them. It was all through his sheer folly that those men lost their lives.’

“When I heard him I was in two minds whether or no to draw the keen blade that hung by my sturdy thigh and cut his head off in spite of his being a near relation of my own; but the men interceded for him and said, ‘Sir, if it may so be, let this fellow stay here and mind the ship, but take the rest of us with you to Circe’s house.’

“On this we all went inland, and Eurylochus was not left behind after all, but came on too, for he was frightened by the severe reprimand that I had given him.

“Meanwhile Circe had been seeing that the men who had been left behind were washed and anointed with olive oil; she had also given them woollen cloaks and shirts, and when we came we found them all comfortably at dinner in her house. As soon as the men saw each other face to face and knew one another, they wept for joy and cried aloud till the whole palace rang again. Thereon Circe came up to me and said, ‘Odysseus, noble son of Laertes, tell your men to leave off crying; I know how much you have all of you suffered at sea, and how ill you have fared among cruel savages on the mainland, but that is over now, so stay here, and eat and drink till you are once more as strong and hearty as you were when you left Ithaca; for at present you are weakened both in body and mind; you keep all the time thinking of the hardships you have suffered during your travels, so that you have no more cheerfulness left in you.’

“Thus did she speak and we assented. We stayed with Circe for a whole twelvemonth feasting upon an untold quantity both of meat and wine. But when the year had passed in the waning of moons and the long days had come round, my men called me apart and said, ‘Sir, it is time you began to think about going home, if so be you are to be spared to see your house and native country at all.’

“Thus did they speak and I assented. Thereon through the livelong day to the going down of the sun we feasted our fill on meat and wine, but when the sun went down and it came on dark the men laid themselves down to sleep in the covered cloisters. I, however, after I had got into bed with Circe, besought her by her knees, and the goddess listened to what I had got to say. ‘Circe,’ said I, ‘please to keep the promise you made me about furthering me on my homeward voyage. I want to get back and so do my men, they are always pestering me with their complaints as soon as ever your back is turned.’

“And the goddess answered, ‘Odysseus, noble son of Laertes, you shall none of you stay here any longer if you do not want to, but there is another journey which you have got to take before you can sail homewards. You must go to the house of Hades and of dread Persephone to consult the ghost of the blind Theban prophet Teiresias, whose reason is still

unshaken. To him alone has Persephone left his understanding even in death, but the other ghosts flit about aimlessly.’

“I was dismayed when I heard this. I sat up in bed and wept, and would gladly have lived no longer to see the light of the sun, but presently when I was tired of weeping and tossing myself about, I said, ‘And who shall guide me upon this voyage – for the house of Hades is a port that no ship can reach.’

“‘You will want no guide,’ she answered; ‘raise your mast, set your white sails, sit quite still, and the North Wind will blow you there of itself. When your ship has traversed the waters of Oceanus, you will reach the fertile shore of Persephone’s country with its groves of tall poplars and willows that shed their fruit untimely; here beach your ship upon the shore of Oceanus, and go straight on to the dark abode of Hades. You will find it near the place where the rivers Pyriphlegethon and Cocytus (which is a branch of the river Styx) flow into Acheron, and you will see a rock near it, just where the two roaring rivers run into one another.

“‘When you have reached this spot, as I now tell you, dig a trench a cubit or so in length, breadth, and depth, and pour into it as a drink-offering to all the dead, first, honey mixed with milk, then wine, and in the third place water – sprinkling white barley meal over the whole. Moreover you must offer many prayers to the poor feeble ghosts, and promise them that when you get back to Ithaca you will sacrifice a barren heifer to them, the best you have, and will load the pyre with good things. More particularly you must promise that Teiresias shall have a black sheep all to himself, the finest in all your flocks.

“‘When you shall have thus besought the ghosts with your prayers, offer them a ram and a black ewe, bending their heads towards Erebus; but yourself turn away from them as though you would make towards the river. On this, many dead men’s ghosts will come to you, and you must tell your men to skin the two sheep that you have just killed, and offer them as a burnt sacrifice with prayers to Hades and to Persephone. Then draw your sword and sit there, so as to prevent any other poor ghost from coming near the spilt blood before Teiresias shall have answered your questions. The seer will presently come to you, and will tell you about your voyage – what stages you are to make, and how you are to sail the sea so as to reach your home.’

“It was day-break by the time she had done speaking, so she dressed me in my shirt and cloak. As for herself she threw a beautiful light gossamer fabric over her shoulders, fastening it with a golden girdle round her waist, and she covered her head with a mantle. Then I went about among the men everywhere all over the house, and spoke kindly to each of them man by man: ‘You must not lie sleeping here any longer,’ said I to them, ‘we must be going, for Circe has told me all about it.’ And on this they did as I bade them.

“Even so, however, I did not get them away without misadventure. We had with us a certain youth named Elpenor, not very remarkable for sense or courage, who had got drunk and was lying on the house-top away from the rest of the men, to sleep off his liquor in the cool. When he heard the noise of the men bustling about, he jumped up on a sudden and forgot all about coming down by the main staircase, so he tumbled right off the roof and broke his neck, and his soul went down to the house of Hades.

“When I had got the men together I said to them, ‘You think you are about to start home again, but Circe has explained to me that instead of this, we have got to go to the house of Hades and Persephone to consult the ghost of the Theban prophet Teiresias.’

“The men were broken-hearted as they heard me, and threw themselves on the ground groaning and tearing their hair, but they did not mend matters by crying. When we reached the sea shore, weeping and lamenting our fate, Circe brought the ram and the ewe, and we made them fast hard by the ship. She passed through the midst of us without our knowing it, for who can see the comings and goings of a god, if the god does not wish to be seen?

# Book 11

**“THEN, WHEN WE HAD** got down to the sea shore we drew our ship into the water and got her mast and sails into her; we also put the sheep on board and took our places, weeping and in great distress of mind. Circe, that great and cunning goddess, sent us a fair wind that blew dead aft and staid steadily with us keeping our sails all the time well filled; so we did whatever wanted doing to the ship’s gear and let her go as the wind and helmsman headed her. All day long her sails were full as she held her

course over the sea, but when the sun went down and darkness was over all the earth, we got into the deep waters of the river Oceanus, where lie the land and city of the Cimmerians who live enshrouded in mist and darkness which the rays of the sun never pierce neither at his rising nor as he goes down again out of the heavens, but the poor wretches live in one long melancholy night. When we got there we beached the ship, took the sheep out of her, and went along by the waters of Oceanus till we came to the place of which Circe had told us.

"Here Perimedes and Eurylochus held the victims, while I drew my sword and dug the trench a cubit each way. I made a drink-offering to all the dead, first with honey and milk, then with wine, and thirdly with water, and I sprinkled white barley meal over the whole, praying earnestly to the poor feckless ghosts, and promising them that when I got back to Ithaca I would sacrifice a barren heifer for them, the best I had, and would load the pyre with good things. I also particularly promised that Teiresias should have a black sheep to himself, the best in all my flocks. When I had prayed sufficiently to the dead, I cut the throats of the two sheep and let the blood run into the trench, whereon the ghosts came trooping up from Erebus – brides, young bachelors, old men worn out with toil, maids who had been crossed in love, and brave men who had been killed in battle, with their armour still smirched with blood; they came from every quarter and flitted round the trench with a strange kind of screaming sound that made me turn pale with fear. When I saw them coming I told the men to be quick and flay the carcasses of the two dead sheep and make burnt offerings of them, and at the same time to repeat prayers to Hades and to Persephone; but I sat where I was with my sword drawn and would not let the poor feckless ghosts come near the blood till Teiresias should have answered my questions.

"The first ghost that came was that of my comrade Elpenor, for he had not yet been laid beneath the earth. We had left his body unwaked and unburied in Circe's house, for we had had too much else to do. I was very sorry for him, and cried when I saw him: 'Elpenor,' said I, 'how did you come down here into this gloom and darkness? You have got here on foot quicker than I have with my ship.'

"'Sir,' he answered with a groan, 'it was all bad luck, and my own unspeakable drunkenness. I was lying asleep on the top of Circe's house,

and never thought of coming down again by the great staircase but fell right off the roof and broke my neck, so my soul came down to the house of Hades. And now I beseech you by all those whom you have left behind you, though they are not here, by your wife, by the father who brought you up when you were a child, and by Telemachus who is the one hope of your house, do what I shall now ask you. I know that when you leave this limbo you will again hold your ship for the Aeaean island. Do not go thence leaving me unwaked and unburied behind you, or I may bring heaven's anger upon you; but burn me with whatever armour I have, build a barrow for me on the sea shore, that may tell people in days to come what a poor unlucky fellow I was, and plant over my grave the oar I used to row with when I was yet alive and with my messmates.' And I said, 'My poor fellow, I will do all that you have asked of me.'

"Thus, then, did we sit and hold sad talk with one another, I on the one side of the trench with my sword held over the blood, and the ghost of my comrade saying all this to me from the other side. Then came the ghost of my dead mother Anticlea, daughter to Autolycus. I had left her alive when I set out for Troy and was moved to tears when I saw her, but even so, for all my sorrow I would not let her come near the blood till I had asked my questions of Teiresias.

"Then came also the ghost of Theban Teiresias, with his golden sceptre in his hand. He knew me and said, 'Odysseus, noble son of Laertes, why, poor man, have you left the light of day and come down to visit the dead in this sad place? Stand back from the trench and withdraw your sword that I may drink of the blood and answer your questions truly.'

"So I drew back, and sheathed my sword, whereon when he had drank of the blood he began with his prophecy.

"'You want to know,' said he, 'about your return home, but heaven will make this hard for you. I do not think that you will escape the eye of Poseidon, who still nurses his bitter grudge against you for having blinded his son. Still, after much suffering you may get home if you can restrain yourself and your companions when your ship reaches the Thrinacian island, where you will find the sheep and cattle belonging to the sun, who sees and gives ear to everything. If you leave these flocks unharmed and think of nothing but of getting home, you may yet after much hardship reach Ithaca; but if you harm them, then I forewarn you of the destruction

both of your ship and of your men. Even though you may yourself escape, you will return in bad plight after losing all your men, in another man's ship, and you will find trouble in your house, which will be overrun by high-handed people, who are devouring your substance under the pretext of paying court and making presents to your wife.

"'When you get home you will take your revenge on these suitors; and after you have killed them by force or fraud in your own house, you must take a well made oar and carry it on and on, till you come to a country where the people have never heard of the sea and do not even mix salt with their food, nor do they know anything about ships, and oars that are as the wings of a ship. I will give you this certain token which cannot escape your notice. A wayfarer will meet you and will say it must be a winnowing shovel that you have got upon your shoulder; on this you must fix the oar in the ground and sacrifice a ram, a bull, and a boar to Poseidon. Then go home and offer hecatombs to all the gods in heaven one after the other. As for yourself, death shall come to you from the sea, and your life shall ebb away very gently when you are full of years and peace of mind, and your people shall bless you. All that I have said will come true.

"'This,' I answered, 'must be as it may please heaven, but tell me and tell me and tell me true, I see my poor mother's ghost close by us; she is sitting by the blood without saying a word, and though I am her own son she does not remember me and speak to me; tell me, Sir, how I can make her know me.'

"'That,' said he, 'I can soon do. Any ghost that you let taste of the blood will talk with you like a reasonable being, but if you do not let them have any blood they will go away again.'

"On this the ghost of Teiresias went back to the house of Hades, for his prophecyings had now been spoken, but I sat still where I was until my mother came up and tasted the blood. Then she knew me at once and spoke fondly to me, saying, 'My son, how did you come down to this abode of darkness while you are still alive? It is a hard thing for the living to see these places, for between us and them there are great and terrible waters, and there is Oceanus, which no man can cross on foot, but he must have a good ship to take him. Are you all this time trying to find your way home from Troy, and have you never yet got back to Ithaca nor seen your wife in your own house?'

“‘Mother,’ said I, ‘I was forced to come here to consult the ghost of the Theban prophet Teiresias. I have never yet been near the Achaean land nor set foot on my native country, and I have had nothing but one long series of misfortunes from the very first day that I set out with Agamemnon for Ilius, the land of noble steeds, to fight the Trojans. But tell me, and tell me true, in what way did you die? Did you have a long illness, or did heaven vouchsafe you a gentle easy passage to eternity? Tell me also about my father, and the son whom I left behind me, is my property still in their hands, or has some one else got hold of it, who thinks that I shall not return to claim it? Tell me again what my wife intends doing, and in what mind she is; does she live with my son and guard my estate securely, or has she made the best match she could and married again?’

“My mother answered, ‘Your wife still remains in your house, but she is in great distress of mind and spends her whole time in tears both night and day. No one as yet has got possession of your fine property, and Telemachus still holds your lands undisturbed. He has to entertain largely, as of course he must, considering his position as a magistrate, and how every one invites him; your father remains at his old place in the country and never goes near the town. He has no comfortable bed nor bedding; in the winter he sleeps on the floor in front of the fire with the men and goes about all in rags, but in summer, when the warm weather comes on again, he lies out in the vineyard on a bed of vine leaves thrown any how upon the ground. He grieves continually about your never having come home, and suffers more and more as he grows older. As for my own end it was in this wise: heaven did not take me swiftly and painlessly in my own house, nor was I attacked by any illness such as those that generally wear people out and kill them, but my longing to know what you were doing and the force of my affection for you – this it was that was the death of me.’

“Then I tried to find some way of embracing my poor mother’s ghost. Thrice I sprang towards her and tried to clasp her in my arms, but each time she flitted from my embrace as it were a dream or phantom, and being touched to the quick I said to her, ‘Mother, why do you not stay still when I would embrace you? If we could throw our arms around one another we might find sad comfort in the sharing of our sorrows even in the house of Hades; does Persephone want to lay a still further load of grief upon me by mocking me with a phantom only?’

“‘My son,’ she answered, ‘most ill-fated of all mankind, it is not Persephone that is beguiling you, but all people are like this when they are dead. The sinews no longer hold the flesh and bones together; these perish in the fierceness of consuming fire as soon as life has left the body, and the soul flits away as though it were a dream. Now, however, go back to the light of day as soon as you can, and note all these things that you may tell them to your wife hereafter.’

“Thus did we converse, and anon Persephone sent up the ghosts of the wives and daughters of all the most famous men. They gathered in crowds about the blood, and I considered how I might question them severally. In the end I deemed that it would be best to draw the keen blade that hung by my sturdy thigh, and keep them from all drinking the blood at once. So they came up one after the other, and each one as I questioned her told me her race and lineage.

“The first I saw was Tyro. She was daughter of Salmoneus and wife of Cretheus the son of Aeolus. She fell in love with the river Enipeus who is much the most beautiful river in the whole world. Once when she was taking a walk by his side as usual, Poseidon, disguised as her lover, lay with her at the mouth of the river, and a huge blue wave arched itself like a mountain over them to hide both woman and god, whereon he loosed her virgin girdle and laid her in a deep slumber. When the god had accomplished the deed of love, he took her hand in his own and said, ‘Tyro, rejoice in all good will; the embraces of the gods are not fruitless, and you will have fine twins about this time twelve months. Take great care of them. I am Poseidon, so now go home, but hold your tongue and do not tell any one.’

“Then he dived under the sea, and she in due course bore Pelias and Neleus, who both of them served Zeus with all their might. Pelias was a great breeder of sheep and lived in Iolcus, but the other lived in Pylos. The rest of her children were by Cretheus, namely, Aeson, Pheres, and Amythaon, who was a mighty warrior and charioteer.

“Next to her I saw Antiope, daughter to Asopus, who could boast of having slept in the arms of even Zeus himself, and who bore him two sons Amphion and Zethus. These founded Thebes with its seven gates, and built a wall all round it; for strong though they were they could not hold Thebes till they had walled it.

“Then I saw Alcmene, the wife of Amphitryon, who also bore to Zeus indomitable Heracles; and Megara who was daughter to great King Creon, and married the redoubtable son of Amphitryon.

“I also saw fair Jocasta mother of king Oedipus whose awful lot it was to marry her own son without suspecting it. He married her after having killed his father, but the gods proclaimed the whole story to the world; whereon he remained king of Thebes, in great grief for the spite the gods had borne him; but Jocasta went to the house of the mighty jailor Hades, having hanged herself for grief, and the avenging spirits haunted him as for an outraged mother – to his ruing bitterly thereafter.

“Then I saw Chloris, whom Neleus married for her beauty, having given priceless presents for her. She was youngest daughter to Amphion son of Iasus and king of Minyan Orchomenus, and was Queen in Pylos. She bore Nestor, Chromius, and Periclymenus, and she also bore that marvellously lovely woman Pero, who was wooed by all the country round; but Neleus would only give her to him who should raid the cattle of Iphicles from the grazing grounds of Phylace, and this was a hard task. The only man who would undertake to raid them was a certain excellent seer, but the will of heaven was against him, for the rangers of the cattle caught him and put him in prison; nevertheless when a full year had passed and the same season came round again, Iphicles set him at liberty, after he had expounded all the oracles of heaven. Thus, then, was the will of Zeus accomplished.

“And I saw Leda the wife of Tyndarus, who bore him two famous sons, Castor breaker of horses, and Polydeuces the mighty boxer. Both these heroes are lying under the earth, though they are still alive, for by a special dispensation of Zeus, they die and come to life again, each one of them every other day throughout all time, and they have the rank of gods.

“After her I saw Iphimedeia wife of Aloeus who boasted the embrace of Poseidon. She bore two sons Otus and Ephialtes, but both were short lived. They were the finest children that were ever born in this world, and the best looking, Orion only excepted; for at nine years old they were nine fathoms high, and measured nine cubits round the chest. They threatened to make war with the gods in Olympus, and tried to set Mount Ossa on the top of Mount Olympus, and Mount Pelion on the top of Ossa, that they might scale heaven itself, and they would have done it too if they had been

grown up, but Apollo, son of Leto, killed both of them, before they had got so much as a sign of hair upon their cheeks or chin.

"Then I saw Phaedra, and Procris, and fair Ariadne daughter of the magician Minos, whom Theseus was carrying off from Crete to Athens, but he did not enjoy her, for before he could do so Artemis killed her in the island of Dia on account of what Dionysus had said against her.

"I also saw Maera and Clymene and hateful Eriphyle, who sold her own husband for gold. But it would take me all night if I were to name every single one of the wives and daughters of heroes whom I saw, and it is time for me to go to bed, either on board ship with my crew, or here. As for my escort, heaven and yourselves will see to it."

Here he ended, and the guests sat all of them enthralled and speechless throughout the covered cloister. Then Arete said to them:

"What do you think of this man, O Phaeacians? Is he not tall and good looking, and is he not clever? True, he is my own guest, but all of you share in the distinction. Do not be in a hurry to send him away, nor niggardly in the presents you make to one who is in such great need, for heaven has blessed all of you with great abundance."

Then spoke the aged hero Echeneus who was one of the oldest men among them, "My friends," said he, "what our august queen has just said to us is both reasonable and to the purpose, therefore be persuaded by it; but the decision whether in word or deed rests ultimately with King Alcinous."

"The thing shall be done," exclaimed Alcinous, "as surely as I still live and reign over the Phaeacians. Our guest is indeed very anxious to get home, still we must persuade him to remain with us until tomorrow, by which time I shall be able to get together the whole sum that I mean to give him. As regards his escort it will be a matter for you all, and mine above all others as the chief person among you."

And Odysseus answered, "King Alcinous, if you were to bid me to stay here for a whole twelve months, and then speed me on my way, loaded with your noble gifts, I should obey you gladly and it would redound greatly to my advantage, for I should return fuller-handed to my own people, and should thus be more respected and beloved by all who see me when I get back to Ithaca."

“Odysseus,” replied Alcinous, “not one of us who sees you has any idea that you are a charlatan or a swindler. I know there are many people going about who tell such plausible stories that it is very hard to see through them, but there is a style about your language which assures me of your good disposition. Moreover you have told the story of your own misfortunes, and those of the Argives, as though you were a practiced bard; but tell me, and tell me true, whether you saw any of the mighty heroes who went to Troy at the same time with yourself, and perished there. The evenings are still at their longest, and it is not yet bed time – go on, therefore, with your divine story, for I could stay here listening till tomorrow morning, so long as you will continue to tell us of your adventures.”

“Alcinous,” answered Odysseus, “there is a time for making speeches, and a time for going to bed; nevertheless, since you so desire, I will not refrain from telling you the still sadder tale of those of my comrades who did not fall fighting with the Trojans, but perished on their return, through the treachery of a wicked woman.

“When Persephone had dismissed the female ghosts in all directions, the ghost of Agamemnon son of Atreus came sadly up to me, surrounded by those who had perished with him in the house of Aegisthus. As soon as he had tasted the blood, he knew me, and weeping bitterly stretched out his arms towards me to embrace me; but he had no strength nor substance any more, and I too wept and pitied him as I beheld him. ‘How did you come by your death,’ said I, ‘King Agamemnon? Did Poseidon raise his winds and waves against you when you were at sea, or did your enemies make an end of you on the main land when you were cattle-lifting or sheep-stealing, or while they were fighting in defence of their wives and city?’

“‘Odysseus,’ he answered, ‘noble son of Laertes, I was not lost at sea in any storm of Poseidon’s raising, nor did my foes despatch me upon the mainland, but Aegisthus and my wicked wife were the death of me between them. He asked me to his house, feasted me, and then butchered me most miserably as though I were a fat beast in a slaughter house, while all around me my comrades were slain like sheep or pigs for the wedding breakfast, or picnic, or gorgeous banquet of some great nobleman. You must have seen numbers of men killed either in a general engagement, or in single combat, but you never saw anything so truly pitiable as the way

in which we fell in that cloister, with the mixing bowl and the loaded tables lying all about, and the ground reeking with our blood. I heard Priam's daughter Cassandra scream as Clytemnestra killed her close beside me. I lay dying upon the earth with the sword in my body, and raised my hands to kill the slut of a murderess, but she slipped away from me; she would not even close my lips nor my eyes when I was dying, for there is nothing in this world so cruel and so shameless as a woman when she has fallen into such guilt as hers was. Fancy murdering her own husband! I thought I was going to be welcomed home by my children and my servants, but her abominable crime has brought disgrace on herself and all women who shall come after – even on the good ones.'

"And I said, 'In truth Zeus has hated the house of Atreus from first to last in the matter of their women's counsels. See how many of us fell for Helen's sake, and now it seems that Clytemnestra hatched mischief against you too during your absence.'

"'Be sure, therefore,' continued Agamemnon, 'and not be too friendly even with your own wife. Do not tell her all that you know perfectly well yourself. Tell her a part only, and keep your own counsel about the rest. Not that your wife, Odysseus, is likely to murder you, for Penelope is a very admirable woman, and has an excellent nature. We left her a young bride with an infant at her breast when we set out for Troy. This child no doubt is now grown up happily to man's estate, and he and his father will have a joyful meeting and embrace one another as it is right they should do, whereas my wicked wife did not even allow me the happiness of looking upon my son, but killed me ere I could do so. Furthermore I say – and lay my saying to your heart – do not tell people when you are bringing your ship to Ithaca, but steal a march upon them, for after all this there is no trusting women. But now tell me, and tell me true, can you give me any news of my son Orestes? Is he in Orchomenus, or at Pylos, or is he at Sparta with Menelaus – for I presume that he is still living.'

"And I said, 'Agamemnon, why do you ask me? I do not know whether your son is alive or dead, and it is not right to talk when one does not know.'

"As we two sat weeping and talking thus sadly with one another the ghost of Achilles came up to us with Patroclus, Antilochus, and Ajax who was the finest and goodliest man of all the Danaans after the son of Peleus. The

fleet descendant of Aeacus knew me and spoke piteously, saying, ‘Odysseus, noble son of Laertes, what deed of daring will you undertake next, that you venture down to the house of Hades among us silly dead, who are but the ghosts of them that can labour no more?’

“And I said, ‘Achilles, son of Peleus, foremost champion of the Achaeans, I came to consult Teiresias, and see if he could advise me about my return home to Ithaca, for I have never yet been able to get near the Achaean land, nor to set foot in my own country, but have been in trouble all the time. As for you, Achilles, no one was ever yet so fortunate as you have been, nor ever will be, for you were adored by all us Argives as long as you were alive, and now that you are here you are a great prince among the dead. Do not, therefore, take it so much to heart even if you are dead.’

“‘Say not a word,’ he answered, ‘in death’s favour; I would rather be a paid servant in a poor man’s house and be above ground than king of kings among the dead. But give me news about my son; is he gone to the wars and will he be a great soldier, or is this not so? Tell me also if you have heard anything about my father Peleus – does he still rule among the Myrmidons, or do they show him no respect throughout Hellas and Phthia now that he is old and his limbs fail him? Could I but stand by his side, in the light of day, with the same strength that I had when I killed the bravest of our foes upon the plain of Troy – could I but be as I then was and go even for a short time to my father’s house, any one who tried to do him violence or supersede him would soon rue it.’

“‘I have heard nothing,’ I answered, ‘of Peleus, but I can tell you all about your son Neoptolemus, for I took him in my own ship from Scyros with the Achaeans. In our councils of war before Troy he was always first to speak, and his judgement was unerring. Nestor and I were the only two who could surpass him; and when it came to fighting on the plain of Troy, he would never remain with the body of his men, but would dash on far in front, foremost of them all in valour. Many a man did he kill in battle – I cannot name every single one of those whom he slew while fighting on the side of the Argives, but will only say how he killed that valiant hero Eurypylus son of Telephus, who was the handsomest man I ever saw except Memnon; many others also of the Ceteians fell around him by reason of a woman’s bribes. Moreover, when all the bravest of the Argives went inside the horse that Epeus had made, and it was left to me to settle

when we should either open the door of our ambuscade, or close it, though all the other leaders and chief men among the Danaans were drying their eyes and quaking in every limb, I never once saw him turn pale nor wipe a tear from his cheek; he was all the time urging me to break out from the horse – grasping the handle of his sword and his bronze-shod spear, and breathing fury against the foe. Yet when we had sacked the city of Priam he got his handsome share of the prize money and went on board (such is the fortune of war) without a wound upon him, neither from a thrown spear nor in close combat, for the rage of Ares is a matter of great chance.'

"When I had told him this, the ghost of Achilles strode off across a meadow full of asphodel, exulting over what I had said concerning the prowess of his son.

"The ghosts of other dead men stood near me and told me each his own melancholy tale; but that of Ajax son of Telamon alone held aloof – still angry with me for having won the cause in our dispute about the armour of Achilles. Thetis had offered it as a prize, but the Trojan prisoners and Athene were the judges. Would that I had never gained the day in such a contest, for it cost the life of Ajax, who was foremost of all the Danaans after the son of Peleus, alike in stature and prowess.

"When I saw him I tried to pacify him and said, 'Ajax, will you not forget and forgive even in death, but must the judgement about that hateful armour still rankle with you? It cost us Argives dear enough to lose such a tower of strength as you were to us. We mourned you as much as we mourned Achilles son of Peleus himself, nor can the blame be laid on anything but on the spite which Zeus bore against the Danaans, for it was this that made him counsel your destruction – come hither, therefore, bring your proud spirit into subjection, and hear what I can tell you.'

"He would not answer, but turned away to Erebus and to the other ghosts; nevertheless, I should have made him talk to me in spite of his being so angry, or I should have gone on talking to him, only that there were still others among the dead whom I desired to see.

"Then I saw Minos son of Zeus with his golden sceptre in his hand sitting in judgement on the dead, and the ghosts were gathered sitting and standing round him in the spacious house of Hades, to learn his sentences upon them.

“After him I saw huge Orion in a meadow full of asphodel driving the ghosts of the wild beasts that he had killed upon the mountains, and he had a great bronze club in his hand, unbreakable for ever and ever.

“And I saw Tityus son of Gaea stretched upon the plain and covering some nine acres of ground. Two vultures on either side of him were digging their beaks into his liver, and he kept on trying to beat them off with his hands, but could not; for he had violated Zeus’s mistress Leto as she was going through Panopeus on her way to Pytho.

“I saw also the dreadful fate of Tantalus, who stood in a lake that reached his chin; he was dying to quench his thirst, but could never reach the water, for whenever the poor creature stooped to drink, it dried up and vanished, so that there was nothing but dry ground – parched by the spite of heaven. There were tall trees, moreover, that shed their fruit over his head – pears, pomegranates, apples, sweet figs and juicy olives, but whenever the poor creature stretched out his hand to take some, the wind tossed the branches back again to the clouds.

“And I saw Sisyphus at his endless task raising his prodigious stone with both his hands. With hands and feet he tried to roll it up to the top of the hill, but always, just before he could roll it over on to the other side, its weight would be too much for him, and the pitiless stone would come thundering down again on to the plain. Then he would begin trying to push it up hill again, and the sweat ran off him and the steam rose after him.

“After him I saw mighty Heracles, but it was his phantom only, for he is feasting ever with the immortal gods, and has lovely Hebe to wife, who is daughter of Zeus and Hera. The ghosts were screaming round him like scared birds flying all whithers. He looked black as night with his bare bow in his hands and his arrow on the string, glaring around as though ever on the point of taking aim. About his breast there was a wondrous golden belt adorned in the most marvellous fashion with bears, wild boars, and lions with gleaming eyes; there was also war, battle, and death. The man who made that belt, do what he might, would never be able to make another like it. Heracles knew me at once when he saw me, and spoke piteously, saying, ‘My poor Odysseus, noble son of Laertes, are you too leading the same sorry kind of life that I did when I was above ground? I was son of Zeus, but I went through an infinity of suffering, for I became bondsman to one who was far beneath me – a low fellow who set me all

manner of labours. He once sent me here to fetch the hell-hound – for he did not think he could find anything harder for me than this, but I got the hound out of Hades and brought him to him, for Hermes and Athene helped me.'

"On this Heracles went down again into the house of Hades, but I stayed where I was in case some other of the mighty dead should come to me. And I should have seen still other of them that are gone before, whom I would fain have seen – Theseus and Pirithous – glorious children of the gods, but so many thousands of ghosts came round me and uttered such appalling cries, that I was panic stricken lest Persephone should send up from the house of Hades the head of that awful monster Gorgon. On this I hastened back to my ship and ordered my men to go on board at once and loose the hawsers; so they embarked and took their places, whereon the ship went down the stream of the river Oceanus. We had to row at first, but presently a fair wind sprang up.

# Book 12

**"AFTER WE WERE CLEAR** of the river Oceanus, and had got out into the open sea, we went on till we reached the Aeaean island where there is dawn and sun-rise as in other places. We then drew our ship on to the sands and got out of her on to the shore, where we went to sleep and waited till day should break.

"Then, when the child of morning, rosy-fingered Dawn, appeared, I sent some men to Circe's house to fetch the body of Elpenor. We cut firewood from a wood where the headland jutted out into the sea, and after we had wept over him and lamented him we performed his funeral rites. When his body and armour had been burned to ashes, we raised a cairn, set a stone over it, and at the top of the cairn we fixed the oar that he had been used to row with.

"While we were doing all this, Circe, who knew that we had got back from the house of Hades, dressed herself and came to us as fast as she could; and her maid servants came with her bringing us bread, meat, and wine. Then she stood in the midst of us and said, 'You have done a bold thing in going down alive to the house of Hades, and you will have died twice, to other people's once; now, then, stay here for the rest of the day,

feast your fill, and go on with your voyage at daybreak tomorrow morning. In the meantime I will tell Odysseus about your course, and will explain everything to him so as to prevent your suffering from misadventure either by land or sea.'

"We agreed to do as she had said, and feasted through the livelong day to the going down of the sun, but when the sun had set and it came on dark, the men laid themselves down to sleep by the stern cables of the ship. Then Circe took me by the hand and bade me be seated away from the others, while she reclined by my side and asked me all about our adventures.

"'So far so good,' said she, when I had ended my story, 'and now pay attention to what I am about to tell you – heaven itself, indeed, will recall it to your recollection. First you will come to the Sirens who enchant all who come near them. If any one unwarily draws in too close and hears the singing of the Sirens, his wife and children will never welcome him home again, for they sit in a green field and warble him to death with the sweetness of their song. There is a great heap of dead men's bones lying all around, with the flesh still rotting off them. Therefore pass these Sirens by, and stop your men's ears with wax that none of them may hear; but if you like you can listen yourself, for you may get the men to bind you as you stand upright on a cross piece half way up the mast, and they must lash the rope's ends to the mast itself, that you may have the pleasure of listening. If you beg and pray the men to unloose you, then they must bind you faster.

"'When your crew have taken you past these Sirens, I cannot give you coherent directions as to which of two courses you are to take; I will lay the two alternatives before you, and you must consider them for yourself. On the one hand there are some overhanging rocks against which the deep blue waves of Amphitrite beat with terrific fury; the blessed gods call these rocks the Wanderers. Here not even a bird may pass, no, not even the timid doves that bring ambrosia to Father Zeus, but the sheer rock always carries off one of them, and Father Zeus has to send another to make up their number; no ship that ever yet came to these rocks has got away again, but the waves and whirlwinds of fire are freighted with wreckage and with the bodies of dead men. The only vessel that ever sailed and got through, was the famous *Argo* on her way from the house of Aeetes, and she too

would have gone against these great rocks, only that Hera piloted her past them for the love she bore to Jason.

"'Of these two rocks the one reaches heaven and its peak is lost in a dark cloud. This never leaves it, so that the top is never clear not even in summer and early autumn. No man though he had twenty hands and twenty feet could get a foothold on it and climb it, for it runs sheer up, as smooth as though it had been polished. In the middle of it there is a large cavern, looking West and turned towards Erebus; you must take your ship this way, but the cave is so high up that not even the stoutest archer could send an arrow into it. Inside it Scylla sits and yelps with a voice that you might take to be that of a young hound, but in truth she is a dreadful monster and no one – not even a god – could face her without being terror-struck. She has twelve mis-shapen feet, and six necks of the most prodigious length; and at the end of each neck she has a frightful head with three rows of teeth in each, all set very close together, so that they would crunch any one to death in a moment, and she sits deep within her shady cell thrusting out her heads and peering all round the rock, fishing for dolphins or dogfish or any larger monster that she can catch, of the thousands with which Amphitrite teems. No ship ever yet got past her without losing some men, for she shoots out all her heads at once, and carries off a man in each mouth.

"'You will find the other rock lie lower, but they are so close together that there is not more than a bow-shot between them. A large fig tree in full leaf grows upon it, and under it lies the sucking whirlpool of Charybdis. Three times in the day does she vomit forth her waters, and three times she sucks them down again; see that you be not there when she is sucking, for if you are, Poseidon himself could not save you; you must hug the Scylla side and drive ship by as fast as you can, for you had better lose six men than your whole crew.'

"'Is there no way,' said I, 'of escaping Charybdis, and at the same time keeping Scylla off when she is trying to harm my men?'

"'You dare devil,' replied the goddess, 'you are always wanting to fight somebody or something; you will not let yourself be beaten even by the immortals. For Scylla is not mortal; moreover she is savage, extreme, rude, cruel and invincible. There is no help for it; your best chance will be to get by her as fast as ever you can, for if you dawdle about her rock

while you are putting on your armour, she may catch you with a second cast of her six heads, and snap up another half dozen of your men; so drive your ship past her at full speed, and roar out lustily to Crataiis who is Scylla's dam, bad luck to her; she will then stop her from making a second raid upon you.'

"'You will now come to the Thrinacian island, and here you will see many herds of cattle and flocks of sheep belonging to the sun-god – seven herds of cattle and seven flocks of sheep, with fifty head in each flock. They do not breed, nor do they become fewer in number, and they are tended by the goddesses Phaethusa and Lampetie, who are children of the sun-god Hyperion by Neaera. Their mother when she had borne them and had done suckling them sent them to the Thrinacian island, which was a long way off, to live there and look after their father's flocks and herds. If you leave these flocks unharmed, and think of nothing but getting home, you may yet after much hardship reach Ithaca; but if you harm them, then I forewarn you of the destruction both of your ship and of your comrades; and even though you may yourself escape, you will return late, in bad plight, after losing all your men.'

"Here she ended, and dawn enthroned in gold began to show in heaven, whereon she returned inland. I then went on board and told my men to loose the ship from her moorings; so they at once got into her, took their places, and began to smite the grey sea with their oars. Presently the great and cunning goddess Circe befriended us with a fair wind that blew dead aft, and staid steadily with us, keeping our sails well filled, so we did whatever wanted doing to the ship's gear, and let her go as wind and helmsman headed her.

"Then, being much troubled in mind, I said to my men, 'My friends, it is not right that one or two of us alone should know the prophecies that Circe has made me, I will therefore tell you about them, so that whether we live or die we may do so with our eyes open. First she said we were to keep clear of the Sirens, who sit and sing most beautifully in a field of flowers; but she said I might hear them myself so long as no one else did. Therefore, take me and bind me to the crosspiece half way up the mast; bind me as I stand upright, with a bond so fast that I cannot possibly break away, and lash the rope's ends to the mast itself. If I beg and pray you to set me free, then bind me more tightly still.'

“I had hardly finished telling everything to the men before we reached the island of the two Sirens, for the wind had been very favourable. Then all of a sudden it fell dead calm; there was not a breath of wind nor a ripple upon the water, so the men furled the sails and stowed them; then taking to their oars they whitened the water with the foam they raised in rowing. Meanwhile I look a large wheel of wax and cut it up small with my sword. Then I kneaded the wax in my strong hands till it became soft, which it soon did between the kneading and the rays of the sun-god son of Hyperion. Then I stopped the ears of all my men, and they bound me hands and feet to the mast as I stood upright on the cross piece; but they went on rowing themselves. When we had got within earshot of the land, and the ship was going at a good rate, the Sirens saw that we were getting in shore and began with their singing.

“‘Come here,’ they sang, ‘renowned Odysseus, honour to the Achaean name, and listen to our two voices. No one ever sailed past us without staying to hear the enchanting sweetness of our song – and he who listens will go on his way not only charmed, but wiser, for we know all the ills that the gods laid upon the Argives and Trojans before Troy, and can tell you everything that is going to happen over the whole world.’

“They sang these words most musically, and as I longed to hear them further I made signs by frowning to my men that they should set me free; but they quickened their stroke, and Eurylochus and Perimedes bound me with still stronger bonds till we had got out of hearing of the Sirens’ voices. Then my men took the wax from their ears and unbound me.

“Immediately after we had got past the island I saw a great wave from which spray was rising, and I heard a loud roaring sound. The men were so frightened that they loosed hold of their oars, for the whole sea resounded with the rushing of the waters, but the ship stayed where it was, for the men had left off rowing. I went round, therefore, and exhorted them man by man not to lose heart.

“‘My friends,’ said I, ‘this is not the first time that we have been in danger, and we are in nothing like so bad a case as when the Cyclops shut us up in his cave; nevertheless, my courage and wise counsel saved us then, and we shall live to look back on all this as well. Now, therefore, let us all do as I say, trust in Zeus and row on with might and main. As for you, coxswain, these are your orders; attend to them, for the ship is in your

hands; turn her head away from these steaming rapids and hug the rock, or she will give you the slip and be over yonder before you know where you are, and you will be the death of us.'

"So they did as I told them; but I said nothing about the awful monster Scylla, for I knew the men would not go on rowing if I did, but would huddle together in the hold. In one thing only did I disobey Circe's strict instructions – I put on my armour. Then seizing two strong spears I took my stand on the ship's bows, for it was there that I expected first to see the monster of the rock, who was to do my men so much harm; but I could not make her out anywhere, though I strained my eyes with looking the gloomy rock all over and over.

"Then we entered the Straits in great fear of mind, for on the one hand was Scylla, and on the other dread Charybdis kept sucking up the salt water. As she vomited it up, it was like the water in a cauldron when it is boiling over upon a great fire, and the spray reached the top of the rocks on either side. When she began to suck again, we could see the water all inside whirling round and round, and it made a deafening sound as it broke against the rocks. We could see the bottom of the whirlpool all black with sand and mud, and the men were at their wits ends for fear. While we were taken up with this, and were expecting each moment to be our last, Scylla pounced down suddenly upon us and snatched up my six best men. I was looking at once after both ship and men, and in a moment I saw their hands and feet ever so high above me, struggling in the air as Scylla was carrying them off, and I heard them call out my name in one last despairing cry. As a fisherman, seated, spear in hand, upon some jutting rock throws bait into the water to deceive the poor little fishes, and spears them with the ox's horn with which his spear is shod, throwing them gasping on to the land as he catches them one by one – even so did Scylla land these panting creatures on her rock and munch them up at the mouth of her den, while they screamed and stretched out their hands to me in their mortal agony. This was the most sickening sight that I saw throughout all my voyages.

"When we had passed the Wandering rocks, with Scylla and terrible Charybdis, we reached the noble island of the sun-god, where were the goodly cattle and sheep belonging to the sun Hyperion. While still at sea in my ship I could bear the cattle lowing as they came home to the yards,

and the sheep bleating. Then I remembered what the blind Theban prophet Teiresias had told me, and how carefully Aeaean Circe had warned me to shun the island of the blessed sun-god. So being much troubled I said to the men, ‘My men, I know you are hard pressed, but listen while I tell you the prophecy that Teiresias made me, and how carefully Aeaean Circe warned me to shun the island of the blessed sun-god, for it was here, she said, that our worst danger would lie. Head the ship, therefore, away from the island.’

“The men were in despair at this, and Eurylochus at once gave me an insolent answer. ‘Odysseus,’ said he, ‘you are cruel; you are very strong yourself and never get worn out; you seem to be made of iron, and now, though your men are exhausted with toil and want of sleep, you will not let them land and cook themselves a good supper upon this island, but bid them put out to sea and go faring fruitlessly on through the watches of the flying night. It is by night that the winds blow hardest and do so much damage; how can we escape should one of those sudden squalls spring up from South West or West, which so often wreck a vessel when our lords the gods are unpropitious? Now, therefore, let us obey the behests of night and prepare our supper here hard by the ship; tomorrow morning we will go on board again and put out to sea.’

“Thus spoke Eurylochus, and the men approved his words. I saw that heaven meant us a mischief and said, ‘You force me to yield, for you are many against one, but at any rate each one of you must take his solemn oath that if he meet with a herd of cattle or a large flock of sheep, he will not be so mad as to kill a single head of either, but will be satisfied with the food that Circe has given us.’

“They all swore as I bade them, and when they had completed their oath we made the ship fast in a harbour that was near a stream of fresh water, and the men went ashore and cooked their suppers. As soon as they had had enough to eat and drink, they began talking about their poor comrades whom Scylla had snatched up and eaten; this set them weeping and they went on crying till they fell off into a sound sleep.

“In the third watch of the night when the stars had shifted their places, Zeus raised a great gale of wind that flew a hurricane so that land and sea were covered with thick clouds, and night sprang forth out of the heavens. When the child of morning, rosy-fingered Dawn, appeared, we brought the

ship to land and drew her into a cave wherein the sea-nymphs hold their courts and dances, and I called the men together in council.

"'My friends,' said I, 'we have meat and drink in the ship, let us mind, therefore, and not touch the cattle, or we shall suffer for it; for these cattle and sheep belong to the mighty sun, who sees and gives ear to everything.' And again they promised that they would obey.

"For a whole month the wind blew steadily from the South, and there was no other wind, but only South and East. As long as corn and wine held out the men did not touch the cattle when they were hungry; when, however, they had eaten all there was in the ship, they were forced to go further afield, with hook and line, catching birds, and taking whatever they could lay their hands on; for they were starving. One day, therefore, I went up inland that I might pray heaven to show me some means of getting away. When I had gone far enough to be clear of all my men, and had found a place that was well sheltered from the wind, I washed my hands and prayed to all the gods in Olympus till by and by they sent me off into a sweet sleep.

"Meanwhile Eurylochus had been giving evil counsel to the men, 'Listen to me,' said he, 'my poor comrades. All deaths are bad enough but there is none so bad as famine. Why should not we drive in the best of these cows and offer them in sacrifice to the immortal gods? If we ever get back to Ithaca, we can build a fine temple to the sun-god and enrich it with every kind of ornament; if, however, he is determined to sink our ship out of revenge for these homed cattle, and the other gods are of the same mind, I for one would rather drink salt water once for all and have done with it, than be starved to death by inches in such a desert island as this is.'

"Thus spoke Eurylochus, and the men approved his words. Now the cattle, so fair and goodly, were feeding not far from the ship; the men, therefore, drove in the best of them, and they all stood round them saying their prayers, and using young oak-shoots instead of barley-meal, for there was no barley left. When they had done praying they killed the cows and dressed their carcasses; they cut out the thigh bones, wrapped them round in two layers of fat, and set some pieces of raw meat on top of them. They had no wine with which to make drink-offerings over the sacrifice while it was cooking, so they kept pouring on a little water from time to time while the inward meats were being grilled; then, when the thigh bones were

burned and they had tasted the inward meats, they cut the rest up small and put the pieces upon the spits.

"By this time my deep sleep had left me, and I turned back to the ship and to the sea shore. As I drew near I began to smell hot roast meat, so I groaned out a prayer to the immortal gods. 'Father Zeus,' I exclaimed, 'and all you other gods who live in everlasting bliss, you have done me a cruel mischief by the sleep into which you have sent me; see what fine work these men of mine have been making in my absence.'

"Meanwhile Lampetie went straight off to the sun and told him we had been killing his cows, whereon he flew into a great rage, and said to the immortals, 'Father Zeus, and all you other gods who live in everlasting bliss, I must have vengeance on the crew of Odysseus' ship: they have had the insolence to kill my cows, which were the one thing I loved to look upon, whether I was going up heaven or down again. If they do not square accounts with me about my cows, I will go down to Hades and shine there among the dead.'

"'Sun,' said Zeus, 'go on shining upon us gods and upon mankind over the fruitful earth. I will shiver their ship into little pieces with a bolt of white lightning as soon as they get out to sea.'

"I was told all this by Calypso, who said she had heard it from the mouth of Hermes.

"As soon as I got down to my ship and to the sea shore I rebuked each one of the men separately, but we could see no way out of it, for the cows were dead already. And indeed the gods began at once to show signs and wonders among us, for the hides of the cattle crawled about, and the joints upon the spits began to low like cows, and the meat, whether cooked or raw, kept on making a noise just as cows do.

"For six days my men kept driving in the best cows and feasting upon them, but when Zeus the son of Cronus had added a seventh day, the fury of the gale abated; we therefore went on board, raised our masts, spread sail, and put out to sea. As soon as we were well away from the island, and could see nothing but sky and sea, the son of Cronus raised a black cloud over our ship, and the sea grew dark beneath it. We did not get on much further, for in another moment we were caught by a terrific squall from the West that snapped the forestays of the mast so that it fell aft, while all the ship's gear tumbled about at the bottom of the vessel. The mast fell upon

the head of the helmsman in the ship's stern, so that the bones of his head were crushed to pieces, and he fell overboard as though he were diving, with no more life left in him.

"Then Zeus let fly with his thunderbolts, and the ship went round and round, and was filled with fire and brimstone as the lightning struck it. The men all fell into the sea; they were carried about in the water round the ship, looking like so many sea-gulls, but the god presently deprived them of all chance of getting home again.

"I stuck to the ship till the sea knocked her sides from her keel (which drifted about by itself) and struck the mast out of her in the direction of the keel; but there was a backstay of stout ox-thong still hanging about it, and with this I lashed the mast and keel together, and getting astride of them was carried wherever the winds chose to take me.

"The gale from the West had now spent its force, and the wind got into the South again, which frightened me lest I should be taken back to the terrible whirlpool of Charybdis. This indeed was what actually happened, for I was borne along by the waves all night, and by sunrise had reached the rock of Scylla, and the whirlpool. She was then sucking down the salt sea water, but I was carried aloft toward the fig tree, which I caught hold of and clung on to like a bat. I could not plant my feet anywhere so as to stand securely, for the roots were a long way off and the boughs that overshadowed the whole pool were too high, too vast, and too far apart for me to reach them; so I hung patiently on, waiting till the pool should discharge my mast and raft again – and a very long while it seemed. A jury-man is not more glad to get home to supper, after having been long detained in court by troublesome cases, than I was to see my raft beginning to work its way out of the whirlpool again. At last I let go with my hands and feet, and fell heavily into the sea, hard by my raft on to which I then got, and began to row with my hands. As for Scylla, the father of gods and men would not let her get further sight of me – otherwise I should have certainly been lost.

"Hence I was carried along for nine days till on the tenth night the gods stranded me on the Ogygian island, where dwells the great and powerful goddess Calypso. She took me in and was kind to me, but I need say no more about this, for I told you and your noble wife all about it yesterday, and I hate saying the same thing over and over again."

# The Return to Ithaca

## Book 13

**THUS DID HE SPEAK**, and they all held their peace throughout the covered cloister, enthralled by the charm of his story, till presently Alcinous began to speak.

"Odysseus," said he, "now that you have reached my house I doubt not you will get home without further misadventure no matter how much you have suffered in the past. To you others, however, who come here night after night to drink my choicest wine and listen to my bard, I would insist as follows. Our guest has already packed up the clothes, wrought gold, and other valuables which you have brought for his acceptance; let us now, therefore, present him further, each one of us, with a large tripod and a cauldron. We will recoup ourselves by the levy of a general rate; for private individuals cannot be expected to bear the burden of such a handsome present."

Every one approved of this, and then they went home to bed each in his own abode. When the child of morning, rosy-fingered Dawn, appeared they hurried down to the ship and brought their cauldrons with them. Alcinous went on board and saw everything so securely stowed under the ship's benches that nothing could break adrift and injure the rowers. Then they went to the house of Alcinous to get dinner, and he sacrificed a bull for them in honour of Zeus who is the lord of all. They set the steaks to grill and made an excellent dinner, after which the inspired bard, Demodocus, who was a favourite with every one, sang to them; but Odysseus kept on turning his eyes towards the sun, as though to hasten his setting, for he was longing to be on his way. As one who has been all day ploughing a fallow field with a couple of oxen keeps thinking about his supper and is glad when night comes that he may go and get it, for it is all his legs can do to carry him, even so did Odysseus rejoice when the sun went down, and he at once said to the Phaeacians, addressing himself more particularly to King Alcinous:

“Sir, and all of you, farewell. Make your drink-offerings and send me on my way rejoicing, for you have fulfilled my heart’s desire by giving me an escort, and making me presents, which heaven grant that I may turn to good account; may I find my admirable wife living in peace among friends, and may you whom I leave behind me give satisfaction to your wives and children; may heaven vouchsafe you every good grace, and may no evil thing come among your people.”

Thus did he speak. His hearers all of them approved his saying and agreed that he should have his escort inasmuch as he had spoken reasonably. Alcinous therefore said to his servant, “Pontonous, mix some wine and hand it round to everybody, that we may offer a prayer to father Zeus, and speed our guest upon his way.”

Pontonous mixed the wine and handed it to every one in turn; the others each from his own seat made a drink-offering to the blessed gods that live in heaven, but Odysseus rose and placed the double cup in the hands of queen Arete.

“Farewell, queen,” said he, “henceforward and for ever, till age and death, the common lot of mankind, lay their hands upon you. I now take my leave; be happy in this house with your children, your people, and with king Alcinous.”

As he spoke he crossed the threshold, and Alcinous sent a man to conduct him to his ship and to the sea shore. Arete also sent some maidservants with him – one with a clean shirt and cloak, another to carry his strong box, and a third with corn and wine. When they got to the water side the crew took these things and put them on board, with all the meat and drink; but for Odysseus they spread a rug and a linen sheet on deck that he might sleep soundly in the stern of the ship. Then he too went on board and lay down without a word, but the crew took every man his place and loosed the hawser from the pierced stone to which it had been bound. Thereon, when they began rowing out to sea, Odysseus fell into a deep, sweet, and almost deathlike slumber.

The ship bounded forward on her way as a four in hand chariot flies over the course when the horses feel the whip. Her prow curvetted as it were the neck of a stallion, and a great wave of dark blue water seethed in her wake. She held steadily on her course, and even a falcon, swiftest of all birds, could not have kept pace with her. Thus, then, she cut her way through the

water, carrying one who was as cunning as the gods, but who was now sleeping peacefully, forgetful of all that he had suffered both on the field of battle and by the waves of the weary sea.

When the bright star that heralds the approach of dawn began to show, the ship drew near to land. Now there is in Ithaca a haven of the old merman Phorcys, which lies between two points that break the line of the sea and shut the harbour in. These shelter it from the storms of wind and sea that rage outside, so that, when once within it, a ship may lie without being even moored. At the head of this harbour there is a large olive tree, and at no great distance a fine overarching cavern sacred to the nymphs who are called Naiades. There are mixing bowls within it and wine-jars of stone, and the bees hive there. Moreover, there are great looms of stone on which the nymphs weave their robes of sea purple – very curious to see – and at all times there is water within it. It has two entrances, one facing North by which mortals can go down into the cave, while the other comes from the South and is more mysterious; mortals cannot possibly get in by it, it is the way taken by the gods.

Into this harbour, then, they took their ship, for they knew the place. She had so much way upon her that she ran half her own length on to the shore; when, however, they had landed, the first thing they did was to lift Odysseus with his rug and linen sheet out of the ship, and lay him down upon the sand still fast asleep. Then they took out the presents which Athene had persuaded the Phaeacians to give him when he was setting out on his voyage homewards. They put these all together by the root of the olive tree, away from the road, for fear some passer by might come and steal them before Odysseus awoke; and then they made the best of their way home again.

But Poseidon did not forget the threats with which he had already threatened Odysseus, so he took counsel with Zeus. “Father Zeus,” said he, “I shall no longer be held in any sort of respect among you gods, if mortals like the Phaeacians, who are my own flesh and blood, show such small regard for me. I said I would let Odysseus get home when he had suffered sufficiently. I did not say that he should never get home at all, for I knew you had already nodded your head about it, and promised that he should do so; but now they have brought him in a ship fast asleep and have landed him in Ithaca after loading him with more magnificent presents of bronze,

gold, and raiment than he would ever have brought back from Troy, if he had had his share of the spoil and got home without misadventure."

And Zeus answered, "What, O Lord of the Earthquake, are you talking about? The gods are by no means wanting in respect for you. It would be monstrous were they to insult one so old and honoured as you are. As regards mortals, however, if any of them is indulging in insolence and treating you disrespectfully, it will always rest with yourself to deal with him as you may think proper, so do just as you please."

"I should have done so at once," replied Poseidon, "if I were not anxious to avoid anything that might displease you; now, therefore, I should like to wreck the Phaeacian ship as it is returning from its escort. This will stop them from escorting people in future; and I should also like to bury their city under a huge mountain."

"My good friend," answered Zeus, "I should recommend you at the very moment when the people from the city are watching the ship on her way, to turn it into a rock near the land and looking like a ship. This will astonish everybody, and you can then bury their city under the mountain."

When earth-encircling Poseidon heard this he went to Scheria where the Phaeacians live, and stayed there till the ship, which was making rapid way, had got close in. Then he went up to it, turned it into stone, and drove it down with the flat of his hand so as to root it in the ground. After this he went away.

The Phaeacians then began talking among themselves, and one would turn towards his neighbour, saying, "Bless my heart, who is it that can have rooted the ship in the sea just as she was getting into port? We could see the whole of her only a moment ago."

This was how they talked, but they knew nothing about it; and Alcinous said, "I remember now the old prophecy of my father. He said that Poseidon would be angry with us for taking every one so safely over the sea, and would one day wreck a Phaeacian ship as it was returning from an escort, and bury our city under a high mountain. This was what my old father used to say, and now it is all coming true. Now therefore let us all do as I say; in the first place we must leave off giving people escorts when they come here, and in the next let us sacrifice twelve picked bulls to Poseidon that he may have mercy upon us, and not bury our city under the

high mountain." When the people heard this they were afraid and got ready the bulls.

Thus did the chiefs and rulers of the Phaeacians pray to king Poseidon, standing round his altar; and at the same time Odysseus woke up once more upon his own soil. He had been so long away that he did not know it again; moreover, Zeus's daughter Athene had made it a foggy day, so that people might not know of his having come, and that she might tell him everything without either his wife or his fellow citizens and friends recognising him until he had taken his revenge upon the wicked suitors. Everything, therefore, seemed quite different to him – the long straight tracks, the harbours, the precipices, and the goodly trees, appeared all changed as he started up and looked upon his native land. So he smote his thighs with the flat of his hands and cried aloud despairingly.

"Alas," he exclaimed, "among what manner of people am I fallen? Are they savage and uncivilised or hospitable and humane? Where shall I put all this treasure, and which way shall I go? I wish I had staid over there with the Phaeacians; or I could have gone to some other great chief who would have been good to me and given me an escort. As it is I do not know where to put my treasure, and I cannot leave it here for fear somebody else should get hold of it. In good truth the chiefs and rulers of the Phaeacians have not been dealing fairly by me, and have left me in the wrong country; they said they would take me back to Ithaca and they have not done so: may Zeus the protector of suppliants chastise them, for he watches over everybody and punishes those who do wrong. Still, I suppose I must count my goods and see if the crew have gone off with any of them."

He counted his goodly coppers and cauldrons, his gold and all his clothes, but there was nothing missing; still he kept grieving about not being in his own country, and wandered up and down by the shore of the sounding sea bewailing his hard fate. Then Athene came up to him disguised as a young shepherd of delicate and princely mien, with a good cloak folded double about her shoulders; she had sandals on her comely feet and held a javelin in her hand. Odysseus was glad when he saw her, and went straight up to her.

"My friend," said he, "you are the first person whom I have met with in this country; I salute you, therefore, and beg you to be well disposed towards me. Protect these my goods, and myself too, for I embrace your

knees and pray to you as though you were a god. Tell me, then, and tell me truly, what land and country is this? Who are its inhabitants? Am I on an island, or is this the sea board of some continent?”

Athene answered, “Stranger, you must be very simple, or must have come from somewhere a long way off, not to know what country this is. It is a very celebrated place, and everybody knows it East and West. It is rugged and not a good driving country, but it is by no means a bad island for what there is of it. It grows any quantity of corn and also wine, for it is watered both by rain and dew; it breeds cattle also and goats; all kinds of timber grow here, and there are watering places where the water never runs dry; so, sir, the name of Ithaca is known even as far as Troy, which I understand to be a long way off from this Achaean country.”

Odysseus was glad at finding himself, as Athene told him, in his own country, and he began to answer, but he did not speak the truth, and made up a lying story in the instinctive wiliness of his heart.

“I heard of Ithaca,” said he, “when I was in Crete beyond the seas, and now it seems I have reached it with all these treasures. I have left as much more behind me for my children, but am flying because I killed Orsilochus son of Idomeneus, the fleetest runner in Crete. I killed him because he wanted to rob me of the spoils I had got from Troy with so much trouble and danger both on the field of battle and by the waves of the weary sea; he said I had not served his father loyally at Troy as vassal, but had set myself up as an independent ruler, so I lay in wait for him with one of my followers by the road side, and speared him as he was coming into town from the country. It was a very dark night and nobody saw us; it was not known, therefore, that I had killed him, but as soon as I had done so I went to a ship and besought the owners, who were Phoenicians, to take me on board and set me in Pylos or in Elis where the Epeans rule, giving them as much spoil as satisfied them. They meant no guile, but the wind drove them off their course, and we sailed on till we came hither by night. It was all we could do to get inside the harbour, and none of us said a word about supper though we wanted it badly, but we all went on shore and lay down just as we were. I was very tired and fell asleep directly, so they took my goods out of the ship, and placed them beside me where I was lying upon the sand. Then they sailed away to Sidonia, and I was left here in great distress of mind.”

Such was his story, but Athene smiled and caressed him with her hand. Then she took the form of a woman, fair, stately, and wise, “He must be indeed a shifty lying fellow,” said she, “who could surpass you in all manner of craft even though you had a god for your antagonist. Dare devil that you are, full of guile, unwearying in deceit, can you not drop your tricks and your instinctive falsehood, even now that you are in your own country again? We will say no more, however, about this, for we can both of us deceive upon occasion – you are the most accomplished counsellor and orator among all mankind, while I for diplomacy and subtlety have no equal among the gods. Did you not know Zeus’s daughter Athene – me, who have been ever with you, who kept watch over you in all your troubles, and who made the Phaeacians take so great a liking to you? And now, again, I am come here to talk things over with you, and help you to hide the treasure I made the Phaeacians give you; I want to tell you about the troubles that await you in your own house; you have got to face them, but tell no one, neither man nor woman, that you have come home again. Bear everything, and put up with every man’s insolence, without a word.”

And Odysseus answered, “A man, goddess, may know a great deal, but you are so constantly changing your appearance that when he meets you it is a hard matter for him to know whether it is you or not. This much, however, I know exceedingly well; you were very kind to me as long as we Achaeans were fighting before Troy, but from the day on which we went on board ship after having sacked the city of Priam, and heaven dispersed us – from that day, Athene, I saw no more of you, and cannot ever remember your coming to my ship to help me in a difficulty; I had to wander on sick and sorry till the gods delivered me from evil and I reached the city of the Phaeacians, where you encouraged me and took me into the town. And now, I beseech you in your father’s name, tell me the truth, for I do not believe I am really back in Ithaca. I am in some other country and you are mocking me and deceiving me in all you have been saying. Tell me then truly, have I really got back to my own country?”

“You are always taking something of that sort in your head,” replied Athene, “and that is why I cannot desert you in your afflictions; you are so plausible, shrewd and shifty. Any one but yourself on returning from so long a voyage would at once have gone home to see his wife and children, but you do not seem to care about asking after them or hearing any news

about them till you have exploited your wife, who remains at home vainly grieving for you, and having no peace night or day for the tears she sheds on your behalf. As for my not coming near you, I was never uneasy about you, for I was certain you would get back safely though you would lose all your men, and I did not wish to quarrel with my uncle Poseidon, who never forgave you for having blinded his son. I will now, however, point out to you the lie of the land, and you will then perhaps believe me. This is the haven of the old merman Phorcys, and here is the olive tree that grows at the head of it; near it is the cave sacred to the Naiades; here too is the overarching cavern in which you have offered many an acceptable hecatomb to the nymphs, and this is the wooded mountain Neritum."

As she spoke the goddess dispersed the mist and the land appeared. Then Odysseus rejoiced at finding himself again in his own land, and kissed the bounteous soil; he lifted up his hands and prayed to the nymphs, saying, "Naiad nymphs, daughters of Zeus, I made sure that I was never again to see you, now therefore I greet you with all loving salutations, and I will bring you offerings as in the old days, if Zeus's redoubtable daughter will grant me life, and bring my son to manhood."

"Take heart, and do not trouble yourself about that," rejoined Athene, "let us rather set about stowing your things at once in the cave, where they will be quite safe. Let us see how we can best manage it all."

Therewith she went down into the cave to look for the safest hiding places, while Odysseus brought up all the treasure of gold, bronze, and good clothing which the Phaeacians had given him. They stowed everything carefully away, and Athene set a stone against the door of the cave. Then the two sat down by the root of the great olive, and consulted how to compass the destruction of the wicked suitors.

"Odysseus," said Athene, "noble son of Laertes, think how you can lay hands on these disreputable people who have been lording it in your house these three years, courting your wife and making wedding presents to her, while she does nothing but lament your absence, giving hope and sending encouraging messages to every one of them, but meaning the very opposite of all she says."

And Odysseus answered, "In good truth, goddess, it seems I should have come to much the same bad end in my own house as Agamemnon did, if you had not given me such timely information. Advise me how I shall best

avenge myself. Stand by my side and put your courage into my heart as on the day when we loosed Troy's fair diadem from her brow. Help me now as you did then, and I will fight three hundred men, if you, goddess, will be with me."

"Trust me for that," said she, "I will not lose sight of you when once we set about it, and I imagine that some of those who are devouring your substance will then bespatter the pavement with their blood and brains. I will begin by disguising you so that no human being shall know you; I will cover your body with wrinkles; you shall lose all your yellow hair; I will clothe you in a garment that shall fill all who see it with loathing; I will blear your fine eyes for you, and make you an unseemly object in the sight of the suitors, of your wife, and of the son whom you left behind you. Then go at once to the swineherd who is in charge of your pigs; he has been always well affected towards you, and is devoted to Penelope and your son; you will find him feeding his pigs near the rock that is called Raven by the fountain Arethusa, where they are fattening on beechmast and spring water after their manner. Stay with him and find out how things are going, while I proceed to Sparta and see your son, who is with Menelaus at Lacedaemon, where he has gone to try and find out whether you are still alive."

"But why," said Odysseus, "did you not tell him, for you knew all about it? Did you want him too to go sailing about amid all kinds of hardship while others are eating up his estate?"

Athene answered, "Never mind about him, I sent him that he might be well spoken of for having gone. He is in no sort of difficulty, but is staying quite comfortably with Menelaus, and is surrounded with abundance of every kind. The suitors have put out to sea and are lying in wait for him, for they mean to kill him before he can get home. I do not much think they will succeed, but rather that some of those who are now eating up your estate will first find a grave themselves."

As she spoke Athene touched him with her wand and covered him with wrinkles, took away all his yellow hair, and withered the flesh over his whole body; she bleared his eyes, which were naturally very fine ones; she changed his clothes and threw an old rag of a wrap about him, and a tunic, tattered, filthy, and begrimed with smoke; she also gave him an undressed

deer skin as an outer garment, and furnished him with a staff and a wallet all in holes, with a twisted thong for him to sling it over his shoulder.

When the pair had thus laid their plans they parted, and the goddess went straight to Lacedaemon to fetch Telemachus.

# Book 14

**ODYSSEUS NOW LEFT** the haven, and took the rough track up through the wooded country and over the crest of the mountain till he reached the place where Athene had said that he would find the swineherd, who was the most thrifty servant he had. He found him sitting in front of his hut, which was by the yards that he had built on a site which could be seen from far. He had made them spacious and fair to see, with a free run for the pigs all round them; he had built them during his master's absence, of stones which he had gathered out of the ground, without saying anything to Penelope or Laertes, and he had fenced them on top with thorn bushes. Outside the yard he had run a strong fence of oaken posts, split, and set pretty close together, while inside he had built twelve styes near one another for the sows to lie in. There were fifty pigs wallowing in each stye, all of them breeding sows; but the boars slept outside and were much fewer in number, for the suitors kept on eating them, and the swineherd had to send them the best he had continually. There were three hundred and sixty boar pigs, and the herdsman's four hounds, which were as fierce as wolves, slept always with them. The swineherd was at that moment cutting out a pair of sandals from a good stout ox hide. Three of his men were out herding the pigs in one place or another, and he had sent the fourth to town with a boar that he had been forced to send the suitors that they might sacrifice it and have their fill of meat.

When the hounds saw Odysseus they set up a furious barking and flew at him, but Odysseus was cunning enough to sit down and loose his hold of the stick that he had in his hand: still, he would have been torn by them in his own homestead had not the swineherd dropped his ox hide, rushed full speed through the gate of the yard and driven the dogs off by shouting and throwing stones at them. Then he said to Odysseus, "Old man, the dogs were likely to have made short work of you, and then you would have got me into trouble. The gods have given me quite enough worries without

that, for I have lost the best of masters, and am in continual grief on his account. I have to attend swine for other people to eat, while he, if he yet lives to see the light of day, is starving in some distant land. But come inside, and when you have had your fill of bread and wine, tell me where you come from, and all about your misfortunes."

On this the swineherd led the way into the hut and bade him sit down. He strewed a good thick bed of rushes upon the floor, and on the top of this he threw the shaggy chamois skin – a great thick one – on which he used to sleep by night. Odysseus was pleased at being made thus welcome, and said "May Zeus, sir, and the rest of the gods grant you your heart's desire in return for the kind way in which you have received me."

To this you answered, O swineherd Eumaeus, "Stranger, though a still poorer man should come here, it would not be right for me to insult him, for all strangers and beggars are from Zeus. You must take what you can get and be thankful, for servants live in fear when they have young lords for their masters; and this is my misfortune now, for heaven has hindered the return of him who would have been always good to me and given me something of my own – a house, a piece of land, a good looking wife, and all else that a liberal master allows a servant who has worked hard for him, and whose labour the gods have prospered as they have mine in the situation which I hold. If my master had grown old here he would have done great things by me, but he is gone, and I wish that Helen's whole race were utterly destroyed, for she has been the death of many a good man. It was this matter that took my master to Ilius, the land of noble steeds, to fight the Trojans in the cause of king Agamemnon."

As he spoke he bound his girdle round him and went to the styes where the young sucking pigs were penned. He picked out two which he brought back with him and sacrificed. He singed them, cut them up, and spitted them; when the meat was cooked he brought it all in and set it before Odysseus, hot and still on the spit, whereon Odysseus sprinkled it over with white barley meal. The swineherd then mixed wine in a bowl of ivy-wood, and taking a seat opposite Odysseus told him to begin.

"Fall to, stranger," said he, "on a dish of servant's pork. The fat pigs have to go to the suitors, who eat them up without shame or scruple; but the blessed gods love not such shameful doings, and respect those who do what is lawful and right. Even the fierce freebooters who go raiding on

other people's land, and Zeus gives them their spoil – even they, when they have filled their ships and got home again live conscience-stricken, and look fearfully for judgement; but some god seems to have told these people that Odysseus is dead and gone; they will not, therefore, go back to their own homes and make their offers of marriage in the usual way, but waste his estate by force, without fear or stint. Not a day or night comes out of heaven, but they sacrifice not one victim nor two only, and they take the run of his wine, for he was exceedingly rich. No other great man either in Ithaca or on the mainland is as rich as he was; he had as much as twenty men put together. I will tell you what he had. There are twelve herds of cattle upon the main land, and as many flocks of sheep, there are also twelve droves of pigs, while his own men and hired strangers feed him twelve widely spreading herds of goats. Here in Ithaca he runs even large flocks of goats on the far end of the island, and they are in the charge of excellent goat herds. Each one of these sends the suitors the best goat in the flock every day. As for myself, I am in charge of the pigs that you see here, and I have to keep picking out the best I have and sending it to them."

This was his story, but Odysseus went on eating and drinking ravenously without a word, brooding his revenge. When he had eaten enough and was satisfied, the swineherd took the bowl from which he usually drank, filled it with wine, and gave it to Odysseus, who was pleased, and said as he took it in his hands, "My friend, who was this master of yours that bought you and paid for you, so rich and so powerful as you tell me? You say he perished in the cause of King Agamemnon; tell me who he was, in case I may have met with such a person. Zeus and the other gods know, but I may be able to give you news of him, for I have travelled much."

Eumaeus answered, "Old man, no traveller who comes here with news will get Odysseus' wife and son to believe his story. Nevertheless, tramps in want of a lodging keep coming with their mouths full of lies, and not a word of truth; every one who finds his way to Ithaca goes to my mistress and tells her falsehoods, whereon she takes them in, makes much of them, and asks them all manner of questions, crying all the time as women will when they have lost their husbands. And you too, old man, for a shirt and a cloak would doubtless make up a very pretty story. But the wolves and birds of prey have long since torn Odysseus to pieces, or the fishes of the

sea have eaten him, and his bones are lying buried deep in sand upon some foreign shore; he is dead and gone, and a bad business it is for all his friends – for me especially; go where I may I shall never find so good a master, not even if I were to go home to my mother and father where I was bred and born. I do not so much care, however, about my parents now, though I should dearly like to see them again in my own country; it is the loss of Odysseus that grieves me most; I cannot speak of him without reverence though he is here no longer, for he was very fond of me, and took such care of me that wherever he may be I shall always honour his memory."

"My friend," replied Odysseus, "you are very positive, and very hard of belief about your master's coming home again, nevertheless I will not merely say, but will swear, that he is coming. Do not give me anything for my news till he has actually come, you may then give me a shirt and cloak of good wear if you will. I am in great want, but I will not take anything at all till then, for I hate a man, even as I hate hell fire, who lets his poverty tempt him into lying. I swear by king Zeus, by the rites of hospitality, and by that hearth of Odysseus to which I have now come, that all will surely happen as I have said it will. Odysseus will return in this self same year; with the end of this moon and the beginning of the next he will be here to do vengeance on all those who are ill treating his wife and son."

To this you answered, O swineherd Eumaeus, "Old man, you will neither get paid for bringing good news, nor will Odysseus ever come home; drink your wine in peace, and let us talk about something else. Do not keep on reminding me of all this; it always pains me when any one speaks about my honoured master. As for your oath we will let it alone, but I only wish he may come, as do Penelope, his old father Laertes, and his son Telemachus. I am terribly unhappy too about this same boy of his; he was running up fast into manhood, and bade fare to be no worse man, face and figure, than his father, but some one, either god or man, has been unsettling his mind, so he has gone off to Pylos to try and get news of his father, and the suitors are lying in wait for him as he is coming home, in the hope of leaving the house of Arceisius without a name in Ithaca. But let us say no more about him, and leave him to be taken, or else to escape if the son of Cronus holds his hand over him to protect him. And now, old man, tell me your own story; tell me also, for I want to know, who you are

and where you come from. Tell me of your town and parents, what manner of ship you came in, how crew brought you to Ithaca, and from what country they professed to come – for you cannot have come by land."

And Odysseus answered, "I will tell you all about it. If there were meat and wine enough, and we could stay here in the hut with nothing to do but to eat and drink while the others go to their work, I could easily talk on for a whole twelve months without ever finishing the story of the sorrows with which it has pleased heaven to visit me.

"I am by birth a Cretan; my father was a well to do man, who had many sons born in marriage, whereas I was the son of a slave whom he had purchased for a concubine; nevertheless, my father Castor son of Hylax (whose lineage I claim, and who was held in the highest honour among the Cretans for his wealth, prosperity, and the valour of his sons) put me on the same level with my brothers who had been born in wedlock. When, however, death took him to the house of Hades, his sons divided his estate and cast lots for their shares, but to me they gave a holding and little else; nevertheless, my valour enabled me to marry into a rich family, for I was not given to bragging, or shirking on the field of battle. It is all over now; still, if you look at the straw you can see what the ear was, for I have had trouble enough and to spare. Ares and Athene made me doughty in war; when I had picked my men to surprise the enemy with an ambuscade I never gave death so much as a thought, but was the first to leap forward and spear all whom I could overtake. Such was I in battle, but I did not care about farm work, nor the frugal home life of those who would bring up children. My delight was in ships, fighting, javelins, and arrows – things that most men shudder to think of; but one man likes one thing and another another, and this was what I was most naturally inclined to. Before the Achaeans went to Troy, nine times was I in command of men and ships on foreign service, and I amassed much wealth. I had my pick of the spoil in the first instance, and much more was allotted to me later on.

"My house grew apace and I became a great man among the Cretans, but when Zeus counselled that terrible expedition, in which so many perished, the people required me and Idomeneus to lead their ships to Troy, and there was no way out of it, for they insisted on our doing so. There we fought for nine whole years, but in the tenth we sacked the city of Priam and sailed home again as heaven dispersed us. Then it was that Zeus

devised evil against me. I spent but one month happily with my children, wife, and property, and then I conceived the idea of making a descent on Egypt, so I fitted out a fine fleet and manned it. I had nine ships, and the people flocked to fill them. For six days I and my men made feast, and I found them many victims both for sacrifice to the gods and for themselves, but on the seventh day we went on board and set sail from Crete with a fair North wind behind us though we were going down a river. Nothing went ill with any of our ships, and we had no sickness on board, but sat where we were and let the ships go as the wind and steersmen took them. On the fifth day we reached the river Aegyptus; there I stationed my ships in the river, bidding my men stay by them and keep guard over them while I sent out scouts to reconnoitre from every point of vantage.

"But the men disobeyed my orders, took to their own devices, and ravaged the land of the Egyptians, killing the men, and taking their wives and children captive. The alarm was soon carried to the city, and when they heard the war cry, the people came out at daybreak till the plain was filled with horsemen and foot soldiers and with the gleam of armour. Then Zeus spread panic among my men, and they would no longer face the enemy, for they found themselves surrounded. The Egyptians killed many of us, and took the rest alive to do forced labour for them. Zeus, however, put it in my mind to do thus – and I wish I had died then and there in Egypt instead, for there was much sorrow in store for me – I took off my helmet and shield and dropped my spear from my hand; then I went straight up to the king's chariot, clasped his knees and kissed them, whereon he spared my life, bade me get into his chariot, and took me weeping to his own home. Many made at me with their ashen spears and tried to kill me in their fury, but the king protected me, for he feared the wrath of Zeus the protector of strangers, who punishes those who do evil.

"I stayed there for seven years and got together much money among the Egyptians, for they all gave me something; but when it was now going on for eight years there came a certain Phoenician, a cunning rascal, who had already committed all sorts of villainy, and this man talked me over into going with him to Phoenicia, where his house and his possessions lay. I stayed there for a whole twelve months, but at the end of that time when months and days had gone by till the same season had come round again, he set me on board a ship bound for Libya, on a pretence that I was to take

a cargo along with him to that place, but really that he might sell me as a slave and take the money I fetched. I suspected his intention, but went on board with him, for I could not help it.

"The ship ran before a fresh North wind till we had reached the sea that lies between Crete and Libya; there, however, Zeus counselled their destruction, for as soon as we were well out from Crete and could see nothing but sea and sky, he raised a black cloud over our ship and the sea grew dark beneath it. Then Zeus let fly with his thunderbolts and the ship went round and round and was filled with fire and brimstone as the lightning struck it. The men fell all into the sea; they were carried about in the water round the ship looking like so many sea-gulls, but the god presently deprived them of all chance of getting home again. I was all dismayed. Zeus, however, sent the ship's mast within my reach, which saved my life, for I clung to it, and drifted before the fury of the gale. Nine days did I drift but in the darkness of the tenth night a great wave bore me on to the Thesprotian coast. There Pheidon king of the Thesprotians entertained me hospitably without charging me anything at all – for his son found me when I was nearly dead with cold and fatigue, whereon he raised me by the hand, took me to his father's house and gave me clothes to wear.

"There it was that I heard news of Odysseus, for the king told me he had entertained him, and shown him much hospitality while he was on his homeward journey. He showed me also the treasure of gold, and wrought iron that Odysseus had got together. There was enough to keep his family for ten generations, so much had he left in the house of king Pheidon. But the king said Odysseus had gone to Dodona that he might learn Zeus's mind from the god's high oak tree, and know whether after so long an absence he should return to Ithaca openly, or in secret. Moreover the king swore in my presence, making drink-offerings in his own house as he did so, that the ship was by the water side, and the crew found, that should take him to his own country. He sent me off however before Odysseus returned, for there happened to be a Thesprotian ship sailing for the wheat-growing island of Dulichium, and he told those in charge of her to be sure and take me safely to King Acastus.

"These men hatched a plot against me that would have reduced me to the very extreme of misery, for when the ship had got some way out from land

they resolved on selling me as a slave. They stripped me of the shirt and cloak that I was wearing, and gave me instead the tattered old clouts in which you now see me; then, towards nightfall, they reached the tilled lands of Ithaca, and there they bound me with a strong rope fast in the ship, while they went on shore to get supper by the sea side. But the gods soon undid my bonds for me, and having drawn my rags over my head I slid down the rudder into the sea, where I struck out and swam till I was well clear of them, and came ashore near a thick wood in which I lay concealed. They were very angry at my having escaped and went searching about for me, till at last they thought it was no further use and went back to their ship. The gods, having hidden me thus easily, then took me to a good man's door – for it seems that I am not to die yet awhile."

To this you answered, O swineherd Eumaeus, "Poor unhappy stranger, I have found the story of your misfortunes extremely interesting, but that part about Odysseus is not right; and you will never get me to believe it. Why should a man like you go about telling lies in this way? I know all about the return of my master. The gods one and all of them detest him, or they would have taken him before Troy, or let him die with friends around him when the days of his fighting were done; for then the Achaeans would have built a mound over his ashes and his son would have been heir to his renown, but now the storm winds have spirited him away we know not whither.

"As for me I live out of the way here with the pigs, and never go to the town unless when Penelope sends for me on the arrival of some news about Odysseus. Then they all sit round and ask questions, both those who grieve over the king's absence, and those who rejoice at it because they can eat up his property without paying for it. For my own part I have never cared about asking anyone else since the time when I was taken in by an Aetolian, who had killed a man and come a long way till at last he reached my station, and I was very kind to him. He said he had seen Odysseus with Idomeneus among the Cretans, refitting his ships which had been damaged in a gale. He said Odysseus would return in the following summer or autumn with his men, and that he would bring back much wealth. And now you, you unfortunate old man, since fate has brought you to my door, do not try to flatter me in this way with vain hopes. It is not for any such

reason that I shall treat you kindly, but only out of respect for Zeus the god of hospitality, as fearing him and pitying you."

Odysseus answered, "I see that you are of an unbelieving mind; I have given you my oath, and yet you will not credit me; let us then make a bargain, and call all the gods in heaven to witness it. If your master comes home, give me a cloak and shirt of good wear, and send me to Dulichium where I want to go; but if he does not come as I say he will, set your men on to me, and tell them to throw me from yonder precipice, as a warning to tramps not to go about the country telling lies."

"And a pretty figure I should cut then," replied Eumaeus, "both now and hereafter, if I were to kill you after receiving you into my hut and showing you hospitality. I should have to say my prayers in good earnest if I did; but it is just supper time and I hope my men will come in directly, that we may cook something savoury for supper."

Thus did they converse, and presently the swineherds came up with the pigs, which were then shut up for the night in their styes, and a tremendous squealing they made as they were being driven into them. But Eumaeus called to his men and said, "Bring in the best pig you have, that I may sacrifice him for this stranger, and we will take toll of him ourselves. We have had trouble enough this long time feeding pigs, while others reap the fruit of our labour."

On this he began chopping firewood, while the others brought in a fine fat five year old boar pig, and set it at the altar. Eumaeus did not forget the gods, for he was a man of good principles, so the first thing he did was to cut bristles from the pig's face and throw them into the fire, praying to all the gods as he did so that Odysseus might return home again. Then he clubbed the pig with a billet of oak which he had kept back when he was chopping the firewood, and stunned it, while the others slaughtered and singed it. Then they cut it up, and Eumaeus began by putting raw pieces from each joint on to some of the fat; these he sprinkled with barley meal, and laid upon the embers; they cut the rest of the meat up small, put the pieces upon the spits and roasted them till they were done; when they had taken them off the spits they threw them on to the dresser in a heap. The swineherd, who was a most equitable man, then stood up to give every one his share. He made seven portions; one of these he set apart for Hermes the son of Maia and the nymphs, praying to them as he did so; the others

he dealt out to the men man by man. He gave Odysseus some slices cut lengthways down the loin as a mark of especial honour, and Odysseus was much pleased. “I hope, Eumaeus,” said he, “that Zeus will be as well disposed towards you as I am, for the respect you are showing to an outcast like myself.”

To this you answered, O swineherd Eumaeus, “Eat, my good fellow, and enjoy your supper, such as it is. God grants this, and withholds that, just as he thinks right, for he can do whatever he chooses.”

As he spoke he cut off the first piece and offered it as a burnt sacrifice to the immortal gods; then he made them a drink-offering, put the cup in the hands of Odysseus, and sat down to his own portion. Mesaulius brought them their bread; the swineherd had brought this man on his own account from among the Taphians during his master’s absence, and had paid for him with his own money without saying anything either to his mistress or Laertes. They then laid their hands upon the good things that were before them, and when they had had enough to eat and drink, Mesaulius took away what was left of the bread, and they all went to bed after having made a hearty supper.

Now the night came on stormy and very dark, for there was no moon. It poured without ceasing, and the wind blew strong from the West, which is a wet quarter, so Odysseus thought he would see whether Eumaeus, in the excellent care he took of him, would take off his own cloak and give it him, or make one of his men give him one. “Listen to me,” said he, “Eumaeus and the rest of you; when I have said a prayer I will tell you something. It is the wine that makes me talk in this way; wine will make even a wise man fall to singing; it will make him chuckle and dance and say many a word that he had better leave unspoken; still, as I have begun, I will go on. Would that I were still young and strong as when we got up an ambuscade before Troy. Menelaus and Odysseus were the leaders, but I was in command also, for the other two would have it so. When we had come up to the wall of the city we crouched down beneath our armour and lay there under cover of the reeds and thick brushwood that grew about the swamp. It came on to freeze with a North wind blowing; the snow fell small and fine like hoar frost, and our shields were coated thick with rime. The others had all got cloaks and shirts, and slept comfortably enough with their shields about their shoulders, but I had carelessly left my cloak

behind me, not thinking that I should be too cold, and had gone off in nothing but my shirt and shield. When the night was two-thirds through and the stars had shifted their places, I nudged Odysseus who was close to me with my elbow, and he at once gave me his ear.

"'Odysseus,' said I, 'this cold will be the death of me, for I have no cloak; some god fooled me into setting off with nothing on but my shirt, and I do not know what to do.'

"Odysseus, who was as crafty as he was valiant, hit upon the following plan:

"'Keep still,' said he in a low voice, 'or the others will hear you.' Then he raised his head on his elbow.

"'My friends,' said he, 'I have had a dream from heaven in my sleep. We are a long way from the ships; I wish some one would go down and tell Agamemnon to send us up more men at once.'

"On this Thoas son of Andraemon threw off his cloak and set out running to the ships, whereon I took the cloak and lay in it comfortably enough till morning. Would that I were still young and strong as I was in those days, for then some one of you swineherds would give me a cloak both out of good will and for the respect due to a brave soldier; but now people look down upon me because my clothes are shabby."

And Eumaeus answered, "Old man, you have told us an excellent story, and have said nothing so far but what is quite satisfactory; for the present, therefore, you shall want neither clothing nor anything else that a stranger in distress may reasonably expect, but tomorrow morning you have to shake your own old rags about your body again, for we have not many spare cloaks nor shirts up here, but every man has only one. When Odysseus' son comes home again he will give you both cloak and shirt, and send you wherever you may want to go."

With this he got up and made a bed for Odysseus by throwing some goatskins and sheepskins on the ground in front of the fire. Here Odysseus lay down, and Eumaeus covered him over with a great heavy cloak that he kept for a change in case of extraordinarily bad weather.

Thus did Odysseus sleep, and the young men slept beside him. But the swineherd did not like sleeping away from his pigs, so he got ready to go outside, and Odysseus was glad to see that he looked after his property during his master's absence. First he slung his sword over his brawny

shoulders and put on a thick cloak to keep out the wind. He also took the skin of a large and well fed goat, and a javelin in case of attack from men or dogs. Thus equipped he went to his rest where the pigs were camping under an overhanging rock that gave them shelter from the North wind.

# Book 15

**BUT ATHENE** went to the fair city of Lacedaemon to tell Odysseus' son that he was to return at once. She found him and Pisistratus sleeping in the forecourt of Menelaus' house; Pisistratus was fast asleep, but Telemachus could get no rest all night for thinking of his unhappy father, so Athene went close up to him and said:

"Telemachus, you should not remain so far away from home any longer, nor leave your property with such dangerous people in your house; they will eat up everything you have among them, and you will have been on a fool's errand. Ask Menelaus to send you home at once if you wish to find your excellent mother still there when you get back. Her father and brothers are already urging her to marry Eurymachus, who has given her more than any of the others, and has been greatly increasing his wedding presents. I hope nothing valuable may have been taken from the house in spite of you, but you know what women are – they always want to do the best they can for the man who marries them, and never give another thought to the children of their first husband, nor to their father either when he is dead and done with. Go home, therefore, and put everything in charge of the most respectable woman servant that you have, until it shall please heaven to send you a wife of your own. Let me tell you also of another matter which you had better attend to. The chief men among the suitors are lying in wait for you in the Strait between Ithaca and Samos, and they mean to kill you before you can reach home. I do not much think they will succeed; it is more likely that some of those who are now eating up your property will find a grave themselves. Sail night and day, and keep your ship well away from the islands; the god who watches over you and protects you will send you a fair wind. As soon as you get to Ithaca send your ship and men on to the town, but yourself go straight to the swineherd who has charge of your pigs; he is well disposed towards you, stay with

him, therefore, for the night, and then send him to Penelope to tell her that you have got back safe from Pylos."

Then she went back to Olympus; but Telemachus stirred Pisistratus with his heel to rouse him, and said, "Wake up Pisistratus, and yoke the horses to the chariot, for we must set off home."

But Pisistratus said, "No matter what hurry we are in we cannot drive in the dark. It will be morning soon; wait till Menelaus has brought his presents and put them in the chariot for us; and let him say good bye to us in the usual way. So long as he lives a guest should never forget a host who has shown him kindness."

As he spoke day began to break, and Menelaus, who had already risen, leaving Helen in bed, came towards them. When Telemachus saw him he put on his shirt as fast as he could, threw a great cloak over his shoulders, and went out to meet him. "Menelaus," said he, "let me go back now to my own country, for I want to get home."

And Menelaus answered, "Telemachus, if you insist on going I will not detain you. I do not like to see a host either too fond of his guest or too rude to him. Moderation is best in all things, and not letting a man go when he wants to do so is as bad as telling him to go if he would like to stay. One should treat a guest well as long as he is in the house and speed him when he wants to leave it. Wait, then, till I can get your beautiful presents into your chariot, and till you have yourself seen them. I will tell the women to prepare a sufficient dinner for you of what there may be in the house; it will be at once more proper and cheaper for you to get your dinner before setting out on such a long journey. If, moreover, you have a fancy for making a tour in Hellas or in the Peloponnese, I will yoke my horses, and will conduct you myself through all our principal cities. No one will send us away empty handed; every one will give us something – a bronze tripod, a couple of mules, or a gold cup."

"Menelaus," replied Telemachus, "I want to go home at once, for when I came away I left my property without protection, and fear that while looking for my father I shall come to ruin myself, or find that something valuable has been stolen during my absence."

When Menelaus heard this he immediately told his wife and servants to prepare a sufficient dinner from what there might be in the house. At this moment Eteoneus joined him, for he lived close by and had just got up; so

Menelaus told him to light the fire and cook some meat, which he at once did. Then Menelaus went down into his fragrant store room, not alone, but Helen went too, with Megapenthes. When he reached the place where the treasures of his house were kept, he selected a double cup, and told his son Megapenthes to bring also a silver mixing bowl. Meanwhile Helen went to the chest where she kept the lovely dresses which she had made with her own hands, and took out one that was largest and most beautifully enriched with embroidery; it glittered like a star, and lay at the very bottom of the chest. Then they all came back through the house again till they got to Telemachus, and Menelaus said, “Telemachus, may Zeus, the mighty husband of Hera, bring you safely home according to your desire. I will now present you with the finest and most precious piece of plate in all my house. It is a mixing bowl of pure silver, except the rim, which is inlaid with gold, and it is the work of Hephaestus. Phaedimus king of the Sidonians made me a present of it in the course of a visit that I paid him while I was on my return home. I should like to give it to you.”

With these words he placed the double cup in the hands of Telemachus, while Megapenthes brought the beautiful mixing bowl and set it before him. Hard by stood lovely Helen with the robe ready in her hand.

“I too, my son,” said she, “have something for you as a keepsake from the hand of Helen; it is for your bride to wear upon her wedding day. Till then, get your dear mother to keep it for you; thus may you go back rejoicing to your own country and to your home.”

So saying she gave the robe over to him and he received it gladly. Then Pisistratus put the presents into the chariot, and admired them all as he did so. Presently Menelaus took Telemachus and Pisistratus into the house, and they both of them sat down to table. A maid servant brought them water in a beautiful golden ewer, and poured it into a silver basin for them to wash their hands, and she drew a clean table beside them; an upper servant brought them bread and offered them many good things of what there was in the house. Eteoneus carved the meat and gave them each their portions, while Megapenthes poured out the wine. Then they laid their hands upon the good things that were before them, but as soon as they had had enough to eat and drink Telemachus and Pisistratus yoked the horses, and took their places in the chariot. They drove out through the inner gateway and under the echoing gatehouse of the outer court, and Menelaus

came after them with a golden goblet of wine in his right hand that they might make a drink-offering before they set out. He stood in front of the horses and pledged them, saying, “Farewell to both of you; see that you tell Nestor how I have treated you, for he was as kind to me as any father could be while we Achaeans were fighting before Troy.”

“We will be sure, sir,” answered Telemachus, “to tell him everything as soon as we see him. I wish I were as certain of finding Odysseus returned when I get back to Ithaca, that I might tell him of the very great kindness you have shown me and of the many beautiful presents I am taking with me.”

As he was thus speaking a bird flew on his right hand – an eagle with a great white goose in its talons which it had carried off from the farm yard – and all the men and women were running after it and shouting. It came quite close up to them and flew away on their right hands in front of the horses. When they saw it they were glad, and their hearts took comfort within them, whereon Pisistratus said, “Tell me, Menelaus, has heaven sent this omen for us or for you?”

Menelaus was thinking what would be the most proper answer for him to make, but Helen was too quick for him and said, “I will read this matter as heaven has put it in my heart, and as I doubt not that it will come to pass. The eagle came from the mountain where it was bred and has its nest, and in like manner Odysseus, after having travelled far and suffered much, will return to take his revenge – if indeed he is not back already and hatching mischief for the suitors.”

“May Zeus so grant it,” replied Telemachus, “if it should prove to be so, I will make vows to you as though you were a god, even when I am at home.”

As he spoke he lashed his horses and they started off at full speed through the town towards the open country. They swayed the yoke upon their necks and travelled the whole day long till the sun set and darkness was over all the land. Then they reached Pherae, where Diocles lived who was son of Ortilochus, the son of Alpheus. There they passed the night and were treated hospitably. When the child of morning, rosy-fingered Dawn, appeared, they again yoked their horses and their places in the chariot. They drove out through the inner gateway and under the echoing gatehouse of the outer court. Then Pisistratus lashed his horses on and they flew

forward nothing loath; ere long they came to Pylos, and then Telemachus said:

"Pisistratus, I hope you will promise to do what I am going to ask you. You know our fathers were old friends before us; moreover, we are both of an age, and this journey has brought us together still more closely; do not, therefore, take me past my ship, but leave me there, for if I go to your father's house he will try to keep me in the warmth of his good will towards me, and I must go home at once."

Pisistratus thought how he should do as he was asked, and in the end he deemed it best to turn his horses towards the ship, and put Menelaus' beautiful presents of gold and raiment in the stern of the vessel. Then he said, "Go on board at once and tell your men to do so also before I can reach home to tell my father. I know how obstinate he is, and am sure he will not let you go; he will come down here to fetch you, and he will not go back without you. But he will be very angry."

With this he drove his goodly steeds back to the city of the Pylians and soon reached his home, but Telemachus called the men together and gave his orders. "Now, my men," said he, "get everything in order on board the ship, and let us set out home."

Thus did he speak, and they went on board even as he had said. But as Telemachus was thus busied, praying also and sacrificing to Athene in the ship's stern, there came to him a man from a distant country, a seer, who was flying from Argos because he had killed a man. He was descended from Melampus, who used to live in Pylos, the land of sheep; he was rich and owned a great house, but he was driven into exile by the great and powerful king Neleus. Neleus seized his goods and held them for a whole year, during which he was a close prisoner in the house of king Phylacus, and in much distress of mind both on account of the daughter of Neleus and because he was haunted by a great sorrow that dread Erinys had laid upon him. In the end, however, he escaped with his life, drove the cattle from Phylace to Pylos, avenged the wrong that had been done him, and gave the daughter of Neleus to his brother. Then he left the country and went to Argos, where it was ordained that he should reign over much people. There he married, established himself, and had two famous sons Antiphates and Mantius. Antiphates became father of Oicleus, and Oicleus of Amphiaraus, who was dearly loved both by Zeus and by Apollo, but he

did not live to old age, for he was killed in Thebes by reason of a woman's gifts. His sons were Alcmaeon and Amphilochus. Mantius, the other son of Melampus, was father to Polypheides and Cleitus. Aurora, throned in gold, carried off Cleitus for his beauty's sake, that he might dwell among the immortals, but Apollo made Polypheides the greatest seer in the whole world now that Amphiaraus was dead. He quarrelled with his father and went to live in Hyperesia, where he remained and prophesied for all men.

His son, Theoclymenus, it was who now came up to Telemachus as he was making drink-offerings and praying in his ship. "Friend," said he, "now that I find you sacrificing in this place, I beseech you by your sacrifices themselves, and by the god to whom you make them, I pray you also by your own head and by those of your followers tell me the truth and nothing but the truth. Who and whence are you? Tell me also of your town and parents."

Telemachus said, "I will answer you quite truly. I am from Ithaca, and my father is Odysseus, as surely as that he ever lived. But he has come to some miserable end. Therefore I have taken this ship and got my crew together to see if I can hear any news of him, for he has been away a long time."

"I too," answered Theoclymenus, "am an exile, for I have killed a man of my own race. He has many brothers and kinsmen in Argos, and they have great power among the Argives. I am flying to escape death at their hands, and am thus doomed to be a wanderer on the face of the earth. I am your suppliant; take me, therefore, on board your ship that they may not kill me, for I know they are in pursuit."

"I will not refuse you," replied Telemachus, "if you wish to join us. Come, therefore, and in Ithaca we will treat you hospitably according to what we have."

On this he received Theoclymenus' spear and laid it down on the deck of the ship. He went on board and sat in the stern, bidding Theoclymenus sit beside him; then the men let go the hawsers. Telemachus told them to catch hold of the ropes, and they made all haste to do so. They set the mast in its socket in the cross plank, raised it and made it fast with the forestays, and they hoisted their white sails with sheets of twisted ox hide. Athene sent them a fair wind that blew fresh and strong to take the ship on

her course as fast as possible. Thus then they passed by Crouni and Chalcis.

Presently the sun set and darkness was over all the land. The vessel made a quick passage to Pheae and thence on to Elis, where the Epeans rule. Telemachus then headed her for the flying islands, wondering within himself whether he should escape death or should be taken prisoner.

Meanwhile Odysseus and the swineherd were eating their supper in the hut, and the men supped with them. As soon as they had had to eat and drink, Odysseus began trying to prove the swineherd and see whether he would continue to treat him kindly, and ask him to stay on at the station or pack him off to the city; so he said:

"Eumaeus, and all of you, tomorrow I want to go away and begin begging about the town, so as to be no more trouble to you or to your men. Give me your advice therefore, and let me have a good guide to go with me and show me the way. I will go the round of the city begging as I needs must, to see if any one will give me a drink and a piece of bread. I should like also to go to the house of Odysseus and bring news of her husband to Queen Penelope. I could then go about among the suitors and see if out of all their abundance they will give me a dinner. I should soon make them an excellent servant in all sorts of ways. Listen and believe when I tell you that by the blessing of Hermes who gives grace and good name to the works of all men, there is no one living who would make a more handy servant than I should – to put fresh wood on the fire, chop fuel, carve, cook, pour out wine, and do all those services that poor men have to do for their betters."

The swineherd was very much disturbed when he heard this. "Heaven help me," he exclaimed, "what ever can have put such a notion as that into your head? If you go near the suitors you will be undone to a certainty, for their pride and insolence reach the very heavens. They would never think of taking a man like you for a servant. Their servants are all young men, well dressed, wearing good cloaks and shirts, with well looking faces and their hair always tidy, the tables are kept quite clean and are loaded with bread, meat, and wine. Stay where you are, then; you are not in anybody's way; I do not mind your being here, no more do any of the others, and when Telemachus comes home he will give you a shirt and cloak and will send you wherever you want to go."

Odysseus answered, “I hope you may be as dear to the gods as you are to me, for having saved me from going about and getting into trouble; there is nothing worse than being always on the tramp; still, when men have once got low down in the world they will go through a great deal on behalf of their miserable bellies. Since, however, you press me to stay here and await the return of Telemachus, tell me about Odysseus’ mother, and his father whom he left on the threshold of old age when he set out for Troy. Are they still living or are they already dead and in the house of Hades?”

“I will tell you all about them,” replied Eumaeus, “Laertes is still living and prays heaven to let him depart peacefully in his own house, for he is terribly distressed about the absence of his son, and also about the death of his wife, which grieved him greatly and aged him more than anything else did. She came to an unhappy end through sorrow for her son: may no friend or neighbour who has dealt kindly by me come to such an end as she did. As long as she was still living, though she was always grieving, I used to like seeing her and asking her how she did, for she brought me up along with her daughter Ctimene, the youngest of her children; we were boy and girl together, and she made little difference between us. When, however, we both grew up, they sent Ctimene to Same and received a splendid dowry for her. As for me, my mistress gave me a good shirt and cloak with a pair of sandals for my feet, and sent me off into the country, but she was just as fond of me as ever. This is all over now. Still it has pleased heaven to prosper my work in the situation which I now hold. I have enough to eat and drink, and can find something for any respectable stranger who comes here; but there is no getting a kind word or deed out of my mistress, for the house has fallen into the hands of wicked people. Servants want sometimes to see their mistress and have a talk with her; they like to have something to eat and drink at the house, and something too to take back with them into the country. This is what will keep servants in a good humour.”

Odysseus answered, “Then you must have been a very little fellow, Eumaeus, when you were taken so far away from your home and parents. Tell me, and tell me true, was the city in which your father and mother lived sacked and pillaged, or did some enemies carry you off when you were alone tending sheep or cattle, ship you off here, and sell you for whatever your master gave them?”

“Stranger,” replied Eumaeus, “as regards your question: sit still, make yourself comfortable, drink your wine, and listen to me. The nights are now at their longest; there is plenty of time both for sleeping and sitting up talking together; you ought not to go to bed till bed time, too much sleep is as bad as too little; if any one of the others wishes to go to bed let him leave us and do so; he can then take my master’s pigs out when he has done breakfast in the morning. We too will sit here eating and drinking in the hut, and telling one another stories about our misfortunes; for when a man has suffered much, and been buffeted about in the world, he takes pleasure in recalling the memory of sorrows that have long gone by. As regards your question, then, my tale is as follows:

“You may have heard of an island called Syra that lies over above Ortygia, where the land begins to turn round and look in another direction. It is not very thickly peopled, but the soil is good, with much pasture fit for cattle and sheep, and it abounds with wine and wheat. Dearth never comes there, nor are the people plagued by any sickness, but when they grow old Apollo comes with Artemis and kills them with his painless shafts. It contains two communities, and the whole country is divided between these two. My father Ctesius son of Ormenus, a man comparable to the gods, reigned over both.

“Now to this place there came some cunning traders from Phoenicia (for the Phoenicians are great mariners) in a ship which they had freighted with gewgaws of all kinds. There happened to be a Phoenician woman in my father’s house, very tall and comely, and an excellent servant; these scoundrels got hold of her one day when she was washing near their ship, seduced her, and cajoled her in ways that no woman can resist, no matter how good she may be by nature. The man who had seduced her asked her who she was and where she came from, and on this she told him her father’s name. ‘I come from Sidon,’ said she, ‘and am daughter to Arybas, a man rolling in wealth. One day as I was coming into the town from the country, some Taphian pirates seized me and took me here over the sea, where they sold me to the man who owns this house, and he gave them their price for me.’

“The man who had seduced her then said, ‘Would you like to come along with us to see the house of your parents and your parents themselves? They are both alive and are said to be well off.’

“‘I will do so gladly,’ answered she, ‘if you men will first swear me a solemn oath that you will do me no harm by the way.’

“They all swore as she told them, and when they had completed their oath the woman said, ‘Hush; and if any of your men meets me in the street or at the well, do not let him speak to me, for fear some one should go and tell my master, in which case he would suspect something. He would put me in prison, and would have all of you murdered; keep your own counsel therefore; buy your merchandise as fast as you can, and send me word when you have done loading. I will bring as much gold as I can lay my hands on, and there is something else also that I can do towards paying my fare. I am nurse to the son of the good man of the house, a funny little fellow just able to run about. I will carry him off in your ship, and you will get a great deal of money for him if you take him and sell him in foreign parts.’

“On this she went back to the house. The Phoenicians stayed a whole year till they had loaded their ship with much precious merchandise, and then, when they had got freight enough, they sent to tell the woman. Their messenger, a very cunning fellow, came to my father’s house bringing a necklace of gold with amber beads strung among it; and while my mother and the servants had it in their hands admiring it and bargaining about it, he made a sign quietly to the woman and then went back to the ship, whereon she took me by the hand and led me out of the house. In the fore part of the house she saw the tables set with the cups of guests who had been feasting with my father, as being in attendance on him; these were now all gone to a meeting of the public assembly, so she snatched up three cups and carried them off in the bosom of her dress, while I followed her, for I knew no better. The sun was now set, and darkness was over all the land, so we hurried on as fast as we could till we reached the harbour, where the Phoenician ship was lying. When they had got on board they sailed their ways over the sea, taking us with them, and Zeus sent then a fair wind; six days did we sail both night and day, but on the seventh day Artemis struck the woman and she fell heavily down into the ship’s hold as though she were a sea gull alighting on the water; so they threw her overboard to the seals and fishes, and I was left all sorrowful and alone. Presently the winds and waves took the ship to Ithaca, where Laertes gave

sundry of his chattels for me, and thus it was that ever I came to set eyes upon this country."

Odysseus answered, "Eumaeus, I have heard the story of your misfortunes with the most lively interest and pity, but Zeus has given you good as well as evil, for in spite of everything you have a good master, who sees that you always have enough to eat and drink; and you lead a good life, whereas I am still going about begging my way from city to city."

Thus did they converse, and they had only a very little time left for sleep, for it was soon daybreak. In the mean time Telemachus and his crew were nearing land, so they loosed the sails, took down the mast, and rowed the ship into the harbour. They cast out their mooring stones and made fast the hawsers; they then got out upon the sea shore, mixed their wine, and got dinner ready. As soon as they had had enough to eat and drink Telemachus said, "Take the ship on to the town, but leave me here, for I want to look after the herdsmen on one of my farms. In the evening, when I have seen all I want, I will come down to the city, and tomorrow morning in return for your trouble I will give you all a good dinner with meat and wine."

Then Theoclymenus said, "And what, my dear young friend, is to become of me? To whose house, among all your chief men, am I to repair? or shall I go straight to your own house and to your mother?"

"At any other time," replied Telemachus, "I should have bidden you go to my own house, for you would find no want of hospitality; at the present moment, however, you would not be comfortable there, for I shall be away, and my mother will not see you; she does not often show herself even to the suitors, but sits at her loom weaving in an upper chamber, out of their way; but I can tell you a man whose house you can go to – I mean Eurymachus the son of Polybus, who is held in the highest estimation by every one in Ithaca. He is much the best man and the most persistent wooer, of all those who are paying court to my mother and trying to take Odysseus' place. Zeus, however, in heaven alone knows whether or no they will come to a bad end before the marriage takes place."

As he was speaking a bird flew by upon his right hand – a hawk, Apollo's messenger. It held a dove in its talons, and the feathers, as it tore them off, fell to the ground midway between Telemachus and the ship. On this Theoclymenus called him apart and caught him by the hand.

“Telemachus,” said he, “that bird did not fly on your right hand without having been sent there by some god. As soon as I saw it I knew it was an omen; it means that you will remain powerful and that there will be no house in Ithaca more royal than your own.”

“I wish it may prove so,” answered Telemachus. “If it does, I will show you so much good will and give you so many presents that all who meet you will congratulate you.”

Then he said to his friend Piraeus, “Piraeus, son of Clytius, you have throughout shown yourself the most willing to serve me of all those who have accompanied me to Pylos; I wish you would take this stranger to your own house and entertain him hospitably till I can come for him.”

And Piraeus answered, “Telemachus, you may stay away as long as you please, but I will look after him for you, and he shall find no lack of hospitality.”

As he spoke he went on board, and bade the others do so also and loose the hawsers, so they took their places in the ship. But Telemachus bound on his sandals, and took a long and doughty spear with a head of sharpened bronze from the deck of the ship. Then they loosed the hawsers, thrust the ship off from land, and made on towards the city as they had been told to do, while Telemachus strode on as fast as he could, till he reached the homestead where his countless herds of swine were feeding, and where dwelt the excellent swineherd, who was so devoted a servant to his master.

# Book 16

**MEANWHILE ODYSSEUS** and the swineherd had lit a fire in the hut and were were getting breakfast ready at daybreak, for they had sent the men out with the pigs. When Telemachus came up, the dogs did not bark but fawned upon him, so Odysseus, hearing the sound of feet and noticing that the dogs did not bark, said to Eumaeus:

“Eumaeus, I hear footsteps; I suppose one of your men or some one of your acquaintance is coming here, for the dogs are fawning upon him and not barking.”

The words were hardly out of his mouth before his son stood at the door. Eumaeus sprang to his feet, and the bowls in which he was mixing wine fell from his hands, as he made towards his master. He kissed his head and

both his beautiful eyes, and wept for joy. A father could not be more delighted at the return of an only son, the child of his old age, after ten years' absence in a foreign country and after having gone through much hardship. He embraced him, kissed him all over as though he had come back from the dead, and spoke fondly to him saying:

"So you are come, Telemachus, light of my eyes that you are. When I heard you had gone to Pylos I made sure I was never going to see you any more. Come in, my dear child, and sit down, that I may have a good look at you now you are home again; it is not very often you come into the country to see us herdsmen; you stick pretty close to the town generally. I suppose you think it better to keep an eye on what the suitors are doing."

"So be it, old friend," answered Telemachus, "but I am come now because I want to see you, and to learn whether my mother is still at her old home or whether some one else has married her, so that the bed of Odysseus is without bedding and covered with cobwebs."

"She is still at the house," replied Eumaeus, "grieving and breaking her heart, and doing nothing but weep, both night and day continually."

As he spoke he took Telemachus' spear, whereon he crossed the stone threshold and came inside. Odysseus rose from his seat to give him place as he entered, but Telemachus checked him; "Sit down, stranger," said he, "I can easily find another seat, and there is one here who will lay it for me."

Odysseus went back to his own place, and Eumaeus strewed some green brushwood on the floor and threw a sheepskin on top of it for Telemachus to sit upon. Then the swineherd brought them platters of cold meat, the remains from what they had eaten the day before, and he filled the bread baskets with bread as fast as he could. He mixed wine also in bowls of ivy-wood, and took his seat facing Odysseus. Then they laid their hands on the good things that were before them, and as soon as they had had enough to eat and drink Telemachus said to Eumaeus, "Old friend, where does this stranger come from? How did his crew bring him to Ithaca, and who were they? – for assuredly he did not come here by land."

To this you answered, O swineherd Eumaeus, "My son, I will tell you the real truth. He says he is a Cretan, and that he has been a great traveller. At this moment he is running away from a Thesprotian ship, and has taken

refuge at my station, so I will put him into your hands. Do whatever you like with him, only remember that he is your suppliant."

"I am very much distressed," said Telemachus, "by what you have just told me. How can I take this stranger into my house? I am as yet young, and am not strong enough to hold my own if any man attacks me. My mother cannot make up her mind whether to stay where she is and look after the house out of respect for public opinion and the memory of her husband, or whether the time is now come for her to take the best man of those who are wooing her, and the one who will make her the most advantageous offer; still, as the stranger has come to your station I will find him a cloak and shirt of good wear, with a sword and sandals, and will send him wherever he wants to go. Or if you like you can keep him here at the station, and I will send him clothes and food that he may be no burden on you and on your men; but I will not have him go near the suitors, for they are very insolent, and are sure to ill treat him in a way that would greatly grieve me; no matter how valiant a man may be he can do nothing against numbers, for they will be too strong for him."

Then Odysseus said, "Sir, it is right that I should say something myself. I am much shocked about what you have said about the insolent way in which the suitors are behaving in despite of such a man as you are. Tell me, do you submit to such treatment tamely, or has some god set your people against you? May you not complain of your brothers – for it is to these that a man may look for support, however great his quarrel may be? I wish I were as young as you are and in my present mind; if I were son to Odysseus, or, indeed, Odysseus himself, I would rather some one came and cut my head off, but I would go to the house and be the bane of every one of these men. If they were too many for me – I being single-handed – I would rather die fighting in my own house than see such disgraceful sights day after day, strangers grossly maltreated, and men dragging the women servants about the house in an unseemly way, wine drawn recklessly, and bread wasted all to no purpose for an end that shall never be accomplished."

And Telemachus answered, "I will tell you truly everything. There is no enmity between me and my people, nor can I complain of brothers, to whom a man may look for support however great his quarrel may be. Zeus has made us a race of only sons. Laertes was the only son of Arceisius, and

Odysseus only son of Laertes. I am myself the only son of Odysseus who left me behind him when he went away, so that I have never been of any use to him. Hence it comes that my house is in the hands of numberless marauders; for the chiefs from all the neighbouring islands, Dulichium, Same, Zacynthus, as also all the principal men of Ithaca itself, are eating up my house under the pretext of paying court to my mother, who will neither say point blank that she will not marry, nor yet bring matters to an end, so they are making havoc of my estate, and before long will do so with myself into the bargain. The issue, however, rests with heaven. But do you, old friend Eumaeus, go at once and tell Penelope that I am safe and have returned from Pylos. Tell it to herself alone, and then come back here without letting any one else know, for there are many who are plotting mischief against me."

"I understand and heed you," replied Eumaeus; "you need instruct me no further, only as I am going that way say whether I had not better let poor Laertes know that you are returned. He used to superintend the work on his farm in spite of his bitter sorrow about Odysseus, and he would eat and drink at will along with his servants; but they tell me that from the day on which you set out for Pylos he has neither eaten nor drunk as he ought to do, nor does he look after his farm, but sits weeping and wasting the flesh from off his bones."

"More's the pity," answered Telemachus, "I am sorry for him, but we must leave him to himself just now. If people could have everything their own way, the first thing I should choose would be the return of my father; but go, and give your message; then make haste back again, and do not turn out of your way to tell Laertes. Tell my mother to send one of her women secretly with the news at once, and let him hear it from her."

Thus did he urge the swineherd; Eumaeus, therefore, took his sandals, bound them to his feet, and started for the town. Athene watched him well off the station, and then came up to it in the form of a woman – fair, stately, and wise. She stood against the side of the entry, and revealed herself to Odysseus, but Telemachus could not see her, and knew not that she was there, for the gods do not let themselves be seen by everybody. Odysseus saw her, and so did the dogs, for they did not bark, but went scared and whining off to the other side of the yards. She nodded her head

and motioned to Odysseus with her eyebrows; whereon he left the hut and stood before her outside the main wall of the yards. Then she said to him:

"Odysseus, noble son of Laertes, it is now time for you to tell your son: do not keep him in the dark any longer, but lay your plans for the destruction of the suitors, and then make for the town. I will not be long in joining you, for I too am eager for the fray."

As she spoke she touched him with her golden wand. First she threw a fair clean shirt and cloak about his shoulders; then she made him younger and of more imposing presence; she gave him back his colour, filled out his cheeks, and let his beard become dark again. Then she went away and Odysseus came back inside the hut. His son was astounded when he saw him, and turned his eyes away for fear he might be looking upon a god.

"Stranger," said he, "how suddenly you have changed from what you were a moment or two ago. You are dressed differently and your colour is not the same. Are you some one or other of the gods that live in heaven? If so, be propitious to me till I can make you due sacrifice and offerings of wrought gold. Have mercy upon me."

And Odysseus said, "I am no god, why should you take me for one? I am your father, on whose account you grieve and suffer so much at the hands of lawless men."

As he spoke he kissed his son, and a tear fell from his cheek on to the ground, for he had restrained all tears till now. But Telemachus could not yet believe that it was his father, and said:

"You are not my father, but some god is flattering me with vain hopes that I may grieve the more hereafter; no mortal man could of himself contrive to do as you have been doing, and make yourself old and young at a moment's notice, unless a god were with him. A second ago you were old and all in rags, and now you are like some god come down from heaven."

Odysseus answered, "Telemachus, you ought not to be so immeasurably astonished at my being really here. There is no other Odysseus who will come hereafter. Such as I am, it is I, who after long wandering and much hardship have got home in the twentieth year to my own country. What you wonder at is the work of the redoubtable goddess Athene, who does with me whatever she will, for she can do what she pleases. At one moment she makes me like a beggar, and the next I am a young man with

good clothes on my back; it is an easy matter for the gods who live in heaven to make any man look either rich or poor."

As he spoke he sat down, and Telemachus threw his arms about his father and wept. They were both so much moved that they cried aloud like eagles or vultures with crooked talons that have been robbed of their half fledged young by peasants. Thus piteously did they weep, and the sun would have gone down upon their mourning if Telemachus had not suddenly said, "In what ship, my dear father, did your crew bring you to Ithaca? Of what nation did they declare themselves to be – for you cannot have come by land?"

"I will tell you the truth, my son," replied Odysseus. "It was the Phaeacians who brought me here. They are great sailors, and are in the habit of giving escorts to any one who reaches their coasts. They took me over the sea while I was fast asleep, and landed me in Ithaca, after giving me many presents in bronze, gold, and raiment. These things by heaven's mercy are lying concealed in a cave, and I am now come here on the suggestion of Athene that we may consult about killing our enemies. First, therefore, give me a list of the suitors, with their number, that I may learn who, and how many, they are. I can then turn the matter over in my mind, and see whether we two can fight the whole body of them ourselves, or whether we must find others to help us."

To this Telemachus answered, "Father, I have always heard of your renown both in the field and in council, but the task you talk of is a very great one: I am awed at the mere thought of it; two men cannot stand against many and brave ones. There are not ten suitors only, nor twice ten, but ten many times over; you shall learn their number at once. There are fifty-two chosen youths from Dulichium, and they have six servants; from Same there are twenty-four; twenty young Achaeans from Zacynthus, and twelve from Ithaca itself, all of them well born. They have with them a servant Medon, a bard, and two men who can carve at table. If we face such numbers as this, you may have bitter cause to rue your coming, and your revenge. See whether you cannot think of some one who would be willing to come and help us."

"Listen to me," replied Odysseus, "and think whether Athene and her father Zeus may seem sufficient, or whether I am to try and find some one else as well."

“Those whom you have named,” answered Telemachus, “are a couple of good allies, for though they dwell high up among the clouds they have power over both gods and men.”

“These two,” continued Odysseus, “will not keep long out of the fray, when the suitors and we join fight in my house. Now, therefore, return home early tomorrow morning, and go about among the suitors as before. Later on the swineherd will bring me to the city disguised as a miserable old beggar. If you see them ill treating me, steel your heart against my sufferings; even though they drag me feet foremost out of the house, or throw things at me, look on and do nothing beyond gently trying to make them behave more reasonably; but they will not listen to you, for the day of their reckoning is at hand. Furthermore I say, and lay my saying to your heart; when Athene shall put it in my mind, I will nod my head to you, and on seeing me do this you must collect all the armour that is in the house and hide it in the strong store room. Make some excuse when the suitors ask you why you are removing it; say that you have taken it to be out of the way of the smoke, inasmuch as it is no longer what it was when Odysseus went away, but has become soiled and begrimed with soot. Add to this more particularly that you are afraid Zeus may set them on to quarrel over their wine, and that they may do each other some harm which may disgrace both banquet and wooing, for the sight of arms sometimes tempts people to use them. But leave a sword and a spear apiece for yourself and me, and a couple of oxhide shields so that we can snatch them up at any moment; Zeus and Athene will then soon quiet these people. There is also another matter; if you are indeed my son and my blood runs in your veins, let no one know that Odysseus is within the house – neither Laertes, nor yet the swineherd, nor any of the servants, nor even Penelope herself. Let you and me exploit the women alone, and let us also make trial of some other of the men servants, to see who is on our side and whose hand is against us.”

“Father,” replied Telemachus, “you will come to know me by and by, and when you do you will find that I can keep your counsel. I do not think, however, the plan you propose will turn out well for either of us. Think it over. It will take us a long time to go the round of the farms and exploit the men, and all the time the suitors will be wasting your estate with impunity and without compunction. Prove the women by all means, to see

who are disloyal and who guiltless, but I am not in favour of going round and trying the men. We can attend to that later on, if you really have some sign from Zeus that he will support you."

Thus did they converse, and meanwhile the ship which had brought Telemachus and his crew from Pylos had reached the town of Ithaca. When they had come inside the harbour they drew the ship on to the land; their servants came and took their armour from them, and they left all the presents at the house of Clytius. Then they sent a servant to tell Penelope that Telemachus had gone into the country, but had sent the ship to the town to prevent her from being alarmed and made unhappy. This servant and Eumaeus happened to meet when they were both on the same errand of going to tell Penelope. When they reached the House, the servant stood up and said to the queen in the presence of the waiting women, "Your son, Madam, is now returned from Pylos"; but Eumaeus went close up to Penelope, and said privately all that her son had bidden him tell her. When he had given his message he left the house with its outbuildings and went back to his pigs again.

The suitors were surprised and angry at what had happened, so they went outside the great wall that ran round the outer court, and held a council near the main entrance. Eurymachus, son of Polybus, was the first to speak.

"My friends," said he, "this voyage of Telemachus' is a very serious matter; we had made sure that it would come to nothing. Now, however, let us draw a ship into the water, and get a crew together to send after the others and tell them to come back as fast as they can."

He had hardly done speaking when Amphinomus turned in his place and saw the ship inside the harbour, with the crew lowering her sails, and putting by their oars; so he laughed, and said to the others, "We need not send them any message, for they are here. Some god must have told them, or else they saw the ship go by, and could not overtake her."

On this they rose and went to the water side. The crew then drew the ship on shore; their servants took their armour from them, and they went up in a body to the place of assembly, but they would not let any one old or young sit along with them, and Antinous, son of Eupeithes, spoke first.

"Good heavens," said he, "see how the gods have saved this man from destruction. We kept a succession of scouts upon the headlands all day

long, and when the sun was down we never went on shore to sleep, but waited in the ship all night till morning in the hope of capturing and killing him; but some god has conveyed him home in spite of us. Let us consider how we can make an end of him. He must not escape us; our affair is never likely to come off while he is alive, for he is very shrewd, and public feeling is by no means all on our side. We must make haste before he can call the Achaeans in assembly; he will lose no time in doing so, for he will be furious with us, and will tell all the world how we plotted to kill him, but failed to take him. The people will not like this when they come to know of it; we must see that they do us no hurt, nor drive us from our own country into exile. Let us try and lay hold of him either on his farm away from the town, or on the road hither. Then we can divide up his property amongst us, and let his mother and the man who marries her have the house. If this does not please you, and you wish Telemachus to live on and hold his father's property, then we must not gather here and eat up his goods in this way, but must make our offers to Penelope each from his own house, and she can marry the man who will give the most for her, and whose lot it is to win her."

They all held their peace until Amphinomus rose to speak. He was the son of Nisus, who was son to king Aretias, and he was foremost among all the suitors from the wheat-growing and well grassed island of Dulichium; his conversation, moreover, was more agreeable to Penelope than that of any of the other suitors, for he was a man of good natural disposition. "My friends," said he, speaking to them plainly and in all honestly, "I am not in favour of killing Telemachus. It is a heinous thing to kill one who is of noble blood. Let us first take counsel of the gods, and if the oracles of Zeus advise it, I will both help to kill him myself, and will urge everyone else to do so; but if they dissuade us, I would have you hold your hands."

Thus did he speak, and his words pleased them well, so they rose forthwith and went to the house of Odysseus, where they took their accustomed seats.

Then Penelope resolved that she would show herself to the suitors. She knew of the plot against Telemachus, for the servant Medon had overheard their counsels and had told her; she went down therefore to the court attended by her maidens, and when she reached the suitors she stood by

one of the bearing-posts supporting the roof of the cloister holding a veil before her face, and rebuked Antinous saying:

"Antinous, insolent and wicked schemer, they say you are the best speaker and counsellor of any man your own age in Ithaca, but you are nothing of the kind. Madman, why should you try to compass the death of Telemachus, and take no heed of suppliants, whose witness is Zeus himself? It is not right for you to plot thus against one another. Do you not remember how your father fled to this house in fear of the people, who were enraged against him for having gone with some Taphian pirates and plundered the Thesprotians who were at peace with us? They wanted to tear him in pieces and eat up everything he had, but Odysseus stayed their hands although they were infuriated, and now you devour his property without paying for it, and break my heart by wooing his wife and trying to kill his son. Leave off doing so, and stop the others also."

To this Eurymachus son of Polybus answered, "Take heart, Queen Penelope daughter of Icarius, and do not trouble yourself about these matters. The man is not yet born, nor never will be, who shall lay hands upon your son Telemachus, while I yet live to look upon the face of the earth. I say – and it shall surely be – that my spear shall be reddened with his blood; for many a time has Odysseus taken me on his knees, held wine up to my lips to drink, and put pieces of meat into my hands. Therefore Telemachus is much the dearest friend I have, and has nothing to fear from the hands of us suitors. Of course, if death comes to him from the gods, he cannot escape it." He said this to quiet her, but in reality he was plotting against Telemachus.

Then Penelope went upstairs again and mourned her husband till Athene shed sleep over her eyes. In the evening Eumaeus got back to Odysseus and his son, who had just sacrificed a young pig of a year old and were helping one another to get supper ready; Athene therefore came up to Odysseus, turned him into an old man with a stroke of her wand, and clad him in his old clothes again, for fear that the swineherd might recognise him and not keep the secret, but go and tell Penelope.

Telemachus was the first to speak. "So you have got back, Eumaeus," said he. "What is the news of the town? Have the suitors returned, or are they still waiting over yonder, to take me on my way home?"

“I did not think of asking about that,” replied Eumaeus, “when I was in the town. I thought I would give my message and come back as soon as I could. I met a man sent by those who had gone with you to Pylos, and he was the first to tell the news to your mother, but I can say what I saw with my own eyes; I had just got on to the crest of the hill of Hermes above the town when I saw a ship coming into harbour with a number of men in her. They had many shields and spears, and I thought it was the suitors, but I cannot be sure.”

On hearing this Telemachus smiled to his father, but so that Eumaeus could not see him.

Then, when they had finished their work and the meal was ready, they ate it, and every man had his full share so that all were satisfied. As soon as they had had enough to eat and drink, they laid down to rest and enjoyed the boon of sleep.

# Book 17

**WHEN THE CHILD** of morning, rosy-fingered Dawn, appeared, Telemachus bound on his sandals and took a strong spear that suited his hands, for he wanted to go into the city. “Old friend,” said he to the swineherd, “I will now go to the town and show myself to my mother, for she will never leave off grieving till she has seen me. As for this unfortunate stranger, take him to the town and let him beg there of any one who will give him a drink and a piece of bread. I have trouble enough of my own, and cannot be burdened with other people. If this makes him angry so much the worse for him, but I like to say what I mean.”

Then Odysseus said, “Sir, I do not want to stay here; a beggar can always do better in town than country, for any one who likes can give him something. I am too old to care about remaining here at the beck and call of a master. Therefore let this man do as you have just told him, and take me to the town as soon as I have had a warm by the fire, and the day has got a little heat in it. My clothes are wretchedly thin, and this frosty morning I shall be perished with cold, for you say the city is some way off.”

On this Telemachus strode off through the yards, brooding his revenge upon the suitors. When he reached home he stood his spear against a

bearing-post of the cloister, crossed the stone floor of the cloister itself, and went inside.

Nurse Euryclea saw him long before any one else did. She was putting the fleeces on to the seats, and she burst out crying as she ran up to him; all the other maids came up too, and covered his head and shoulders with their kisses. Penelope came out of her room looking like Artemis or Aphrodite, and wept as she flung her arms about her son. She kissed his forehead and both his beautiful eyes, “Light of my eyes,” she cried as she spoke fondly to him, “so you are come home again; I made sure I was never going to see you any more. To think of your having gone off to Pylos without saying anything about it or obtaining my consent. But come, tell me what you saw.”

“Do not scold me, mother,” answered Telemachus, “nor vex me, seeing what a narrow escape I have had, but wash your face, change your dress, go upstairs with your maids, and promise full and sufficient hecatombs to all the gods if Zeus will only grant us our revenge upon the suitors. I must now go to the place of assembly to invite a stranger who has come back with me from Pylos. I sent him on with my crew, and told Piraeus to take him home and look after him till I could come for him myself.”

She heeded her son’s words, washed her face, changed her dress, and vowed full and sufficient hecatombs to all the gods if they would only vouchsafe her revenge upon the suitors.

Telemachus went through, and out of, the cloisters spear in hand – not alone, for his two fleet dogs went with him. Athene endowed him with a presence of such divine comeliness that all marvelled at him as he went by, and the suitors gathered round him with fair words in their mouths and malice in their hearts; but he avoided them, and went to sit with Mentor, Antiphus, and Halitherses, old friends of his father’s house, and they made him tell them all that had happened to him. Then Piraeus came up with Theoclymenus, whom he had escorted through the town to the place of assembly, whereon Telemachus at once joined them. Piraeus was first to speak: “Telemachus,” said he, “I wish you would send some of your women to my house to take away the presents Menelaus gave you.”

“We do not know, Piraeus,” answered Telemachus, “what may happen. If the suitors kill me in my own house and divide my property among them, I would rather you had the presents than that any of those people should get

hold of them. If on the other hand I managed to kill them, I shall be much obliged if you will kindly bring me my presents."

With these words he took Theoclymenus to his own house. When they got there they laid their cloaks on the benches and seats, went into the baths, and washed themselves. When the maids had washed and anointed them, and had given them cloaks and shirts, they took their seats at table. A maid servant then brought them water in a beautiful golden ewer, and poured it into a silver basin for them to wash their hands; and she drew a clean table beside them. An upper servant brought them bread and offered them many good things of what there was in the house. Opposite them sat Penelope, reclining on a couch by one of the bearing-posts of the cloister, and spinning. Then they laid their hands on the good things that were before them, and as soon as they had had enough to eat and drink Penelope said:

"Telemachus, I shall go upstairs and lie down on that sad couch, which I have not ceased to water with my tears, from the day Odysseus set out for Troy with the sons of Atreus. You failed, however, to make it clear to me before the suitors came back to the house, whether or no you had been able to hear anything about the return of your father."

"I will tell you then truth," replied her son. "We went to Pylos and saw Nestor, who took me to his house and treated me as hospitably as though I were a son of his own who had just returned after a long absence; so also did his sons; but he said he had not heard a word from any human being about Odysseus, whether he was alive or dead. He sent me, therefore, with a chariot and horses to Menelaus. There I saw Helen, for whose sake so many, both Argives and Trojans, were in heaven's wisdom doomed to suffer. Menelaus asked me what it was that had brought me to Lacedaemon, and I told him the whole truth, whereon he said, 'So, then, these cowards would usurp a brave man's bed? A hind might as well lay her new-born young in the lair of a lion, and then go off to feed in the forest or in some grassy dell. The lion, when he comes back to his lair, will make short work with the pair of them, and so will Odysseus with these suitors. By father Zeus, Athene, and Apollo, if Odysseus is still the man that he was when he wrestled with Philomeleides in Lesbos, and threw him so heavily that all the Greeks cheered him – if he is still such, and were to come near these suitors, they would have a short shrift and a sorry

wedding. As regards your question, however, I will not prevaricate nor deceive you, but what the old man of the sea told me, so much will I tell you in full. He said he could see Odysseus on an island sorrowing bitterly in the house of the nymph Calypso, who was keeping him prisoner, and he could not reach his home, for he had no ships nor sailors to take him over the sea.' This was what Menelaus told me, and when I had heard his story I came away; the gods then gave me a fair wind and soon brought me safe home again."

With these words he moved the heart of Penelope. Then Theoclymenus said to her:

"Madam, wife of Odysseus, Telemachus does not understand these things; listen therefore to me, for I can divine them surely, and will hide nothing from you. May Zeus the king of heaven be my witness, and the rites of hospitality, with that hearth of Odysseus to which I now come, that Odysseus himself is even now in Ithaca, and, either going about the country or staying in one place, is enquiring into all these evil deeds and preparing a day of reckoning for the suitors. I saw an omen when I was on the ship which meant this, and I told Telemachus about it."

"May it be even so," answered Penelope; "if your words come true, you shall have such gifts and such good will from me that all who see you shall congratulate you."

Thus did they converse. Meanwhile the suitors were throwing discs, or aiming with spears at a mark on the levelled ground in front of the house, and behaving with all their old insolence. But when it was now time for dinner, and the flock of sheep and goats had come into the town from all the country round, with their shepherds as usual, then Medon, who was their favourite servant, and who waited upon them at table, said, "Now then, my young masters, you have had enough sport, so come inside that we may get dinner ready. Dinner is not a bad thing, at dinner time."

They left their sports as he told them, and when they were within the house, they laid their cloaks on the benches and seats inside, and then sacrificed some sheep, goats, pigs, and a heifer, all of them fat and well grown. Thus they made ready for their meal. In the meantime Odysseus and the swineherd were about starting for the town, and the swineherd said, "Stranger, I suppose you still want to go to town today, as my master said you were to do; for my own part I should have liked you to stay here

as a station hand, but I must do as my master tells me, or he will scold me later on, and a scolding from one's master is a very serious thing. Let us then be off, for it is now broad day; it will be night again directly and then you will find it colder."

"I know, and understand you," replied Odysseus; "you need say no more. Let us be going, but if you have a stick ready cut, let me have it to walk with, for you say the road is a very rough one."

As he spoke he threw his shabby old tattered wallet over his shoulders, by the cord from which it hung, and Eumaeus gave him a stick to his liking. The two then started, leaving the station in charge of the dogs and herdsmen who remained behind; the swineherd led the way and his master followed after, looking like some broken down old tramp as he leaned upon his staff, and his clothes were all in rags. When they had got over the rough steep ground and were nearing the city, they reached the fountain from which the citizens drew their water. This had been made by Ithacus, Neritus, and Polyctor. There was a grove of water-loving poplars planted in a circle all round it, and the clear cold water came down to it from a rock high up, while above the fountain there was an altar to the nymphs, at which all wayfarers used to sacrifice. Here Melanthius son of Dolius overtook them as he was driving down some goats, the best in his flock, for the suitors' dinner, and there were two shepherds with him. When he saw Eumaeus and Odysseus he reviled them with outrageous and unseemly language, which made Odysseus very angry.

"There you go," cried he, "and a precious pair you are. See how heaven brings birds of the same feather to one another. Where, pray, master swineherd, are you taking this poor miserable object? It would make any one sick to see such a creature at table. A fellow like this never won a prize for anything in his life, but will go about rubbing his shoulders against every man's door post, and begging, not for swords and cauldrons like a man, but only for a few scraps not worth begging for. If you would give him to me for a hand on my station, he might do to clean out the folds, or bring a bit of sweet feed to the kids, and he could fatten his thighs as much as he pleased on whey; but he has taken to bad ways and will not go about any kind of work; he will do nothing but beg victuals all the town over, to feed his insatiable belly. I say, therefore – and it shall surely be –

if he goes near Odysseus' house he will get his head broken by the stools they will fling at him, till they turn him out."

On this, as he passed, he gave Odysseus a kick on the hip out of pure wantonness, but Odysseus stood firm, and did not budge from the path. For a moment he doubted whether or no to fly at Melanthius and kill him with his staff, or fling him to the ground and beat his brains out; he resolved, however, to endure it and keep himself in check, but the swineherd looked straight at Melanthius and rebuked him, lifting up his hands and praying to heaven as he did so.

"Fountain nymphs," he cried, "children of Zeus, if ever Odysseus burned you thigh bones covered with fat whether of lambs or kids, grant my prayer that heaven may send him home. He would soon put an end to the swaggering threats with which such men as you go about insulting people – gadding all over the town while your flocks are going to ruin through bad shepherding."

Then Melanthius the goatherd answered, "You ill conditioned cur, what are you talking about? Some day or other I will put you on board ship and take you to a foreign country, where I can sell you and pocket the money you will fetch. I wish I were as sure that Apollo would strike Telemachus dead this very day, or that the suitors would kill him, as I am that Odysseus will never come home again."

With this he left them to come on at their leisure, while he went quickly forward and soon reached the house of his master. When he got there he went in and took his seat among the suitors opposite Eurymachus, who liked him better than any of the others. The servants brought him a portion of meat, and an upper woman servant set bread before him that he might eat. Presently Odysseus and the swineherd came up to the house and stood by it, amid a sound of music, for Phemius was just beginning to sing to the suitors. Then Odysseus took hold of the swineherd's hand, and said:

"Eumaeus, this house of Odysseus is a very fine place. No matter how far you go, you will find few like it. One building keeps following on after another. The outer court has a wall with battlements all round it; the doors are double folding, and of good workmanship; it would be a hard matter to take it by force of arms. I perceive, too, that there are many people banqueting within it, for there is a smell of roast meat, and I hear a sound of music, which the gods have made to go along with feasting."

Then Eumaeus said, “You have perceived aright, as indeed you generally do; but let us think what will be our best course. Will you go inside first and join the suitors, leaving me here behind you, or will you wait here and let me go in first? But do not wait long, or some one may see you loitering about outside, and throw something at you. Consider this matter I pray you.”

And Odysseus answered, “I understand and heed. Go in first and leave me here where I am. I am quite used to being beaten and having things thrown at me. I have been so much buffeted about in war and by sea that I am case-hardened, and this too may go with the rest. But a man cannot hide away the cravings of a hungry belly; this is an enemy which gives much trouble to all men; it is because of this that ships are fitted out to sail the seas, and to make war upon other people.”

As they were thus talking, a dog that had been lying asleep raised his head and pricked up his ears. This was Argos, whom Odysseus had bred before setting out for Troy, but he had never had any work out of him. In the old days he used to be taken out by the young men when they went hunting wild goats, or deer, or hares, but now that his master was gone he was lying neglected on the heaps of mule and cow dung that lay in front of the stable doors till the men should come and draw it away to manure the great close; and he was full of fleas. As soon as he saw Odysseus standing there, he dropped his ears and wagged his tail, but he could not get close up to his master. When Odysseus saw the dog on the other side of the yard, he dashed a tear from his eyes without Eumaeus seeing it, and said:

“Eumaeus, what a noble hound that is over yonder on the manure heap: his build is splendid; is he as fine a fellow as he looks, or is he only one of those dogs that come begging about a table, and are kept merely for show?”

“This hound,” answered Eumaeus, “belonged to him who has died in a far country. If he were what he was when Odysseus left for Troy, he would soon show you what he could do. There was not a wild beast in the forest that could get away from him when he was once on its tracks. But now he has fallen on evil times, for his master is dead and gone, and the women take no care of him. Servants never do their work when their master’s hand is no longer over them, for Zeus takes half the goodness out of a man when he makes a slave of him.”

As he spoke he went inside the buildings to the cloister where the suitors were, but Argos died as soon as he had recognised his master.

Telemachus saw Eumaeus long before any one else did, and beckoned him to come and sit beside him; so he looked about and saw a seat lying near where the carver sat serving out their portions to the suitors; he picked it up, brought it to Telemachus' table, and sat down opposite him. Then the servant brought him his portion, and gave him bread from the bread-basket.

Immediately afterwards Odysseus came inside, looking like a poor miserable old beggar, leaning on his staff and with his clothes all in rags. He sat down upon the threshold of ash-wood just inside the doors leading from the outer to the inner court, and against a bearing-post of cypress-wood which the carpenter had skilfully planed, and had made to join truly with rule and line. Telemachus took a whole loaf from the bread-basket, with as much meat as he could hold in his two hands, and said to Eumaeus, "Take this to the stranger, and tell him to go the round of the suitors, and beg from them; a beggar must not be shamefaced."

So Eumaeus went up to him and said, "Stranger, Telemachus sends you this, and says you are to go the round of the suitors begging, for beggars must not be shamefaced."

Odysseus answered, "May King Zeus grant all happiness to Telemachus, and fulfil the desire of his heart."

Then with both hands he took what Telemachus had sent him, and laid it on the dirty old wallet at his feet. He went on eating it while the bard was singing, and had just finished his dinner as he left off. The suitors applauded the bard, whereon Athene went up to Odysseus and prompted him to beg pieces of bread from each one of the suitors, that he might see what kind of people they were, and tell the good from the bad; but come what might she was not going to save a single one of them. Odysseus, therefore, went on his round, going from left to right, and stretched out his hands to beg as though he were a real beggar. Some of them pitied him, and were curious about him, asking one another who he was and where he came from; whereon the goatherd Melanthius said, "Suitors of my noble mistress, I can tell you something about him, for I have seen him before. The swineherd brought him here, but I know nothing about the man himself, nor where he comes from."

On this Antinous began to abuse the swineherd. “You precious idiot,” he cried, “what have you brought this man to town for? Have we not tramps and beggars enough already to pester us as we sit at meat? Do you think it a small thing that such people gather here to waste your master’s property – and must you needs bring this man as well?”

And Eumaeus answered, “Antinous, your birth is good but your words evil. It was no doing of mine that he came here. Who is likely to invite a stranger from a foreign country, unless it be one of those who can do public service as a seer, a healer of hurts, a carpenter, or a bard who can charm us with his singing? Such men are welcome all the world over, but no one is likely to ask a beggar who will only worry him. You are always harder on Odysseus’ servants than any of the other suitors are, and above all on me, but I do not care so long as Telemachus and Penelope are alive and here.”

But Telemachus said, “Hush, do not answer him; Antinous has the bitterest tongue of all the suitors, and he makes the others worse.”

Then turning to Antinous he said, “Antinous, you take as much care of my interests as though I were your son. Why should you want to see this stranger turned out of the house? Heaven forbid; take something and give it him yourself; I do not grudge it; I bid you take it. Never mind my mother, nor any of the other servants in the house; but I know you will not do what I say, for you are more fond of eating things yourself than of giving them to other people.”

“What do you mean, Telemachus,” replied Antinous, “by this swaggering talk? If all the suitors were to give him as much as I will, he would not come here again for another three months.”

As he spoke he drew the stool on which he rested his dainty feet from under the table, and made as though he would throw it at Odysseus, but the other suitors all gave him something, and filled his wallet with bread and meat; he was about, therefore, to go back to the threshold and eat what the suitors had given him, but he first went up to Antinous and said:

“Sir, give me something; you are not, surely, the poorest man here; you seem to be a chief, foremost among them all; therefore you should be the better giver, and I will tell far and wide of your bounty. I too was a rich man once, and had a fine house of my own; in those days I gave to many a tramp such as I now am, no matter who he might be nor what he wanted. I

had any number of servants, and all the other things which people have who live well and are accounted wealthy, but it pleased Zeus to take all away from me. He sent me with a band of roving robbers to Egypt; it was a long voyage and I was undone by it. I stationed my ships in the river Aegyptus, and bade my men stay by them and keep guard over them, while I sent out scouts to reconnoitre from every point of vantage.

"But the men disobeyed my orders, took to their own devices, and ravaged the land of the Egyptians, killing the men, and taking their wives and children captives. The alarm was soon carried to the city, and when they heard the war-cry, the people came out at daybreak till the plain was filled with soldiers horse and foot, and with the gleam of armour. Then Zeus spread panic among my men, and they would no longer face the enemy, for they found themselves surrounded. The Egyptians killed many of us, and took the rest alive to do forced labour for them; as for myself, they gave me to a friend who met them, to take to Cyprus, Dmetor by name, son of Iasus, who was a great man in Cyprus. Thence I am come hither in a state of great misery."

Then Antinous said, "What god can have sent such a pestilence to plague us during our dinner? Get out, into the open part of the court, or I will give you Egypt and Cyprus over again for your insolence and importunity; you have begged of all the others, and they have given you lavishly, for they have abundance round them, and it is easy to be free with other people's property when there is plenty of it."

On this Odysseus began to move off, and said, "Your looks, my fine sir, are better than your breeding; if you were in your own house you would not spare a poor man so much as a pinch of salt, for though you are in another man's, and surrounded with abundance, you cannot find it in you to give him even a piece of bread."

This made Antinous very angry, and he scowled at him saying, "You shall pay for this before you get clear of the court." With these words he threw a footstool at him, and hit him on the right shoulder blade near the top of his back. Odysseus stood firm as a rock and the blow did not even stagger him, but he shook his head in silence as he brooded on his revenge. Then he went back to the threshold and sat down there, laying his well filled wallet at his feet.

“Listen to me,” he cried, “you suitors of Queen Penelope, that I may speak even as I am minded. A man knows neither ache nor pain if he gets hit while fighting for his money, or for his sheep or his cattle; and even so Antinous has hit me while in the service of my miserable belly, which is always getting people into trouble. Still, if the poor have gods and avenging deities at all, I pray them that Antinous may come to a bad end before his marriage.”

“Sit where you are, and eat your victuals in silence, or be off elsewhere,” shouted Antinous. “If you say more I will have you dragged hand and foot through the courts, and the servants shall flay you alive.”

The other suitors were much displeased at this, and one of the young men said, “Antinous, you did ill in striking that poor wretch of a tramp: it will be worse for you if he should turn out to be some god – and we know the gods go about disguised in all sorts of ways as people from foreign countries, and travel about the world to see who do amiss and who righteously.”

Thus said the suitors, but Antinous paid them no heed. Meanwhile Telemachus was furious about the blow that had been given to his father, and though no tear fell from him, he shook his head in silence and brooded on his revenge.

Now when Penelope heard that the beggar had been struck in the banqueting-cloister, she said before her maids, “Would that Apollo would so strike you, Antinous,” and her waiting woman Eurynome answered, “If our prayers were answered not one of the suitors would ever again see the sun rise.” Then Penelope said, “Nurse, I hate every single one of them, for they mean nothing but mischief, but I hate Antinous like the darkness of death itself. A poor unfortunate tramp has come begging about the house for sheer want. Every one else has given him something to put in his wallet, but Antinous has hit him on the right shoulder-blade with a footstool.”

Thus did she talk with her maids as she sat in her own room, and in the meantime Odysseus was getting his dinner. Then she called for the swineherd and said, “Eumaeus, go and tell the stranger to come here, I want to see him and ask him some questions. He seems to have travelled much, and he may have seen or heard something of my unhappy husband.”

To this you answered, O swineherd Eumaeus, “If these Achaeans, Madam, would only keep quiet, you would be charmed with the history of his adventures. I had him three days and three nights with me in my hut, which was the first place he reached after running away from his ship, and he has not yet completed the story of his misfortunes. If he had been the most heaven-taught minstrel in the whole world, on whose lips all hearers hang entranced, I could not have been more charmed as I sat in my hut and listened to him. He says there is an old friendship between his house and that of Odysseus, and that he comes from Crete where the descendants of Minos live, after having been driven hither and thither by every kind of misfortune; he also declares that he has heard of Odysseus as being alive and near at hand among the Thesprotians, and that he is bringing great wealth home with him.”

“Call him here, then,” said Penelope, “that I too may hear his story. As for the suitors, let them take their pleasure indoors or out as they will, for they have nothing to fret about. Their corn and wine remain unwasted in their houses with none but servants to consume them, while they keep hanging about our house day after day sacrificing our oxen, sheep, and fat goats for their banquets, and never giving so much as a thought to the quantity of wine they drink. No estate can stand such recklessness, for we have now no Odysseus to protect us. If he were to come again, he and his son would soon have their revenge.”

As she spoke Telemachus sneezed so loudly that the whole house resounded with it. Penelope laughed when she heard this, and said to Eumaeus, “Go and call the stranger; did you not hear how my son sneezed just as I was speaking? This can only mean that all the suitors are going to be killed, and that not one of them shall escape. Furthermore I say, and lay my saying to your heart: if I am satisfied that the stranger is speaking the truth I shall give him a shirt and cloak of good wear.”

When Eumaeus heard this he went straight to Odysseus and said, “Father stranger, my mistress Penelope, mother of Telemachus, has sent for you; she is in great grief, but she wishes to hear anything you can tell her about her husband, and if she is satisfied that you are speaking the truth, she will give you a shirt and cloak, which are the very things that you are most in want of. As for bread, you can get enough of that to fill your belly, by begging about the town, and letting those give that will.”

“I will tell Penelope,” answered Odysseus, “nothing but what is strictly true. I know all about her husband, and have been partner with him in affliction, but I am afraid of passing through this crowd of cruel suitors, for their pride and insolence reach heaven. Just now, moreover, as I was going about the house without doing any harm, a man gave me a blow that hurt me very much, but neither Telemachus nor any one else defended me. Tell Penelope, therefore, to be patient and wait till sundown. Let her give me a seat close up to the fire, for my clothes are worn very thin – you know they are, for you have seen them ever since I first asked you to help me – she can then ask me about the return of her husband.”

The swineherd went back when he heard this, and Penelope said as she saw him cross the threshold, “Why do you not bring him here, Eumaeus? Is he afraid that some one will ill-treat him, or is he shy of coming inside the house at all? Beggars should not be shamefaced.”

To this you answered, O swineherd Eumaeus, “The stranger is quite reasonable. He is avoiding the suitors, and is only doing what any one else would do. He asks you to wait till sundown, and it will be much better, madam, that you should have him all to yourself, when you can hear him and talk to him as you will.”

“The man is no fool,” answered Penelope, “it would very likely be as he says, for there are no such abominable people in the whole world as these men are.”

When she had done speaking Eumaeus went back to the suitors, for he had explained everything. Then he went up to Telemachus and said in his ear so that none could overhear him, “My dear sir, I will now go back to the pigs, to see after your property and my own business. You will look to what is going on here, but above all be careful to keep out of danger, for there are many who bear you ill will. May Zeus bring them to a bad end before they do us a mischief.”

“Very well,” replied Telemachus, “go home when you have had your dinner, and in the morning come here with the victims we are to sacrifice for the day. Leave the rest to heaven and me.”

On this Eumaeus took his seat again, and when he had finished his dinner he left the courts and the cloister with the men at table, and went back to his pigs. As for the suitors, they presently began to amuse themselves with singing and dancing, for it was now getting on towards evening.

# Book 18

**NOW THERE CAME** a certain common tramp who used to go begging all over the city of Ithaca, and was notorious as an incorrigible glutton and drunkard. This man had no strength nor stay in him, but he was a great hulking fellow to look at; his real name, the one his mother gave him, was Arnaeus, but the young men of the place called him Irus, because he used to run errands for any one who would send him. As soon as he came he began to insult Odysseus, and to try and drive him out of his own house.

"Be off, old man," he cried, "from the doorway, or you shall be dragged out neck and heels. Do you not see that they are all giving me the wink, and wanting me to turn you out by force, only I do not like to do so? Get up then, and go of yourself, or we shall come to blows."

Odysseus frowned on him and said, "My friend, I do you no manner of harm; people give you a great deal, but I am not jealous. There is room enough in this doorway for the pair of us, and you need not grudge me things that are not yours to give. You seem to be just such another tramp as myself, but perhaps the gods will give us better luck by and by. Do not, however, talk too much about fighting or you will incense me, and old though I am, I shall cover your mouth and chest with blood. I shall have more peace tomorrow if I do, for you will not come to the house of Odysseus any more."

Irus was very angry and answered, "You filthy glutton, you run on trippingly like an old fish-fag. I have a good mind to lay both hands about you, and knock your teeth out of your head like so many boar's tusks. Get ready, therefore, and let these people here stand by and look on. You will never be able to fight one who is so much younger than yourself."

Thus roundly did they rate one another on the smooth pavement in front of the doorway, and when Antinous saw what was going on he laughed heartily and said to the others, "This is the finest sport that you ever saw; heaven never yet sent anything like it into this house. The stranger and Irus have quarreled and are going to fight, let us set them on to do so at once."

The suitors all came up laughing, and gathered round the two ragged tramps. "Listen to me," said Antinous, "there are some goats' paunches down at the fire, which we have filled with blood and fat, and set aside for

supper; he who is victorious and proves himself to be the better man shall have his pick of the lot; he shall be free of our table and we will not allow any other beggar about the house at all."

The others all agreed, but Odysseus, to throw them off the scent, said, "Sirs, an old man like myself, worn out with suffering, cannot hold his own against a young one; but my irrepressible belly urges me on, though I know it can only end in my getting a drubbing. You must swear, however that none of you will give me a foul blow to favour Irus and secure him the victory."

They swore as he told them, and when they had completed their oath Telemachus put in a word and said, "Stranger, if you have a mind to settle with this fellow, you need not be afraid of any one here. Whoever strikes you will have to fight more than one. I am host, and the other chiefs, Antinous and Eurymachus, both of them men of understanding, are of the same mind as I am."

Every one assented, and Odysseus girded his old rags about his loins, thus baring his stalwart thighs, his broad chest and shoulders, and his mighty arms; but Athene came up to him and made his limbs even stronger still. The suitors were beyond measure astonished, and one would turn towards his neighbour saying, "The stranger has brought such a thigh out of his old rags that there will soon be nothing left of Irus."

Irus began to be very uneasy as he heard them, but the servants girded him by force, and brought him into the open part of the court in such a fright that his limbs were all of a tremble. Antinous scolded him and said, "You swaggering bully, you ought never to have been born at all if you are afraid of such an old broken down creature as this tramp is. I say, therefore – and it shall surely be – if he beats you and proves himself the better man, I shall pack you off on board ship to the mainland and send you to king Echetus, who kills every one that comes near him. He will cut off your nose and ears, and draw out your entrails for the dogs to eat."

This frightened Irus still more, but they brought him into the middle of the court, and the two men raised their hands to fight. Then Odysseus considered whether he should let drive so hard at him as to make an end of him then and there, or whether he should give him a lighter blow that should only knock him down; in the end he deemed it best to give the lighter blow for fear the Achaeans should begin to suspect who he was.

Then they began to fight, and Irus hit Odysseus on the right shoulder; but Odysseus gave Irus a blow on the neck under the ear that broke in the bones of his skull, and the blood came gushing out of his mouth; he fell groaning in the dust, gnashing his teeth and kicking on the ground, but the suitors threw up their hands and nearly died of laughter, as Odysseus caught hold of him by the foot and dragged him into the outer court as far as the gate-house. There he propped him up against the wall and put his staff in his hands. “Sit here,” said he, “and keep the dogs and pigs off; you are a pitiful creature, and if you try to make yourself king of the beggars any more you shall fare still worse.”

Then he threw his dirty old wallet, all tattered and torn over his shoulder with the cord by which it hung, and went back to sit down upon the threshold; but the suitors went within the cloisters, laughing and saluting him, “May Zeus, and all the other gods,” said they, “grant you whatever you want for having put an end to the importunity of this insatiable tramp. We will take him over to the mainland presently, to king Echetus, who kills every one that comes near him.”

Odysseus hailed this as of good omen, and Antinous set a great goat’s paunch before him filled with blood and fat. Amphinomus took two loaves out of the bread-basket and brought them to him, pledging him as he did so in a golden goblet of wine. “Good luck to you,” he said, “father stranger, you are very badly off at present, but I hope you will have better times by and by.”

To this Odysseus answered, “Amphinomus, you seem to be a man of good understanding, as indeed you may well be, seeing whose son you are. I have heard your father well spoken of; he is Nisus of Dulichium, a man both brave and wealthy. They tell me you are his son, and you appear to be a considerable person; listen, therefore, and take heed to what I am saying. Man is the vainest of all creatures that have their being upon earth. As long as heaven vouchsafes him health and strength, he thinks that he shall come to no harm hereafter, and even when the blessed gods bring sorrow upon him, he bears it as he needs must, and makes the best of it; for God almighty gives men their daily minds day by day. I know all about it, for I was a rich man once, and did much wrong in the stubbornness of my pride, and in the confidence that my father and my brothers would support me; therefore let a man fear God in all things always, and take the good that

heaven may see fit to send him without vain glory. Consider the infamy of what these suitors are doing; see how they are wasting the estate, and doing dishonour to the wife, of one who is certain to return some day, and that, too, not long hence. Nay, he will be here soon; may heaven send you home quietly first that you may not meet with him in the day of his coming, for once he is here the suitors and he will not part bloodlessly."

With these words he made a drink-offering, and when he had drunk he put the gold cup again into the hands of Amphinomus, who walked away serious and bowing his head, for he foreboded evil. But even so he did not escape destruction, for Athene had doomed him to fall by the hand of Telemachus. So he took his seat again at the place from which he had come.

Then Athene put it into the mind of Penelope to show herself to the suitors, that she might make them still more enamoured of her, and win still further honour from her son and husband. So she feigned a mocking laugh and said, "Eurynome, I have changed my mind, and have a fancy to show myself to the suitors although I detest them. I should like also to give my son a hint that he had better not have anything more to do with them. They speak fairly enough but they mean mischief."

"My dear child," answered Eurynome, "all that you have said is true, go and tell your son about it, but first wash yourself and anoint your face. Do not go about with your cheeks all covered with tears; it is not right that you should grieve so incessantly; for Telemachus, whom you always prayed that you might live to see with a beard, is already grown up."

"I know, Eurynome," replied Penelope, "that you mean well, but do not try and persuade me to wash and to anoint myself, for heaven robbed me of all my beauty on the day my husband sailed; nevertheless, tell Autonoe and Hippodamia that I want them. They must be with me when I am in the cloister; I am not going among the men alone; it would not be proper for me to do so."

On this the old woman went out of the room to bid the maids go to their mistress. In the meantime Athene bethought her of another matter, and sent Penelope off into a sweet slumber; so she lay down on her couch and her limbs became heavy with sleep. Then the goddess shed grace and beauty over her that all the Achaeans might admire her. She washed her face with the ambrosial loveliness that Aphrodite wears when she goes

dancing with the Graces; she made her taller and of a more commanding figure, while as for her complexion it was whiter than sawn ivory. When Athene had done all this she went away, whereon the maids came in from the women's room and woke Penelope with the sound of their talking.

"What an exquisitely delicious sleep I have been having," said she, as she passed her hands over her face, "in spite of all my misery. I wish Artemis would let me die so sweetly now at this very moment, that I might no longer waste in despair for the loss of my dear husband, who possessed every kind of good quality and was the most distinguished man among the Achaeans."

With these words she came down from her upper room, not alone but attended by two of her maidens, and when she reached the suitors she stood by one of the bearing-posts supporting the roof of the cloister, holding a veil before her face, and with a staid maid servant on either side of her. As they beheld her the suitors were so overpowered and became so desperately enamoured of her, that each one prayed he might win her for his own bed fellow.

"Telemachus," said she, addressing her son, "I fear you are no longer so discreet and well conducted as you used to be. When you were younger you had a greater sense of propriety; now, however, that you are grown up, though a stranger to look at you would take you for the son of a well to do father as far as size and good looks go, your conduct is by no means what it should be. What is all this disturbance that has been going on, and how came you to allow a stranger to be so disgracefully ill-treated? What would have happened if he had suffered serious injury while a suppliant in our house? Surely this would have been very discreditable to you."

"I am not surprised, my dear mother, at your displeasure," replied Telemachus, "I understand all about it and know when things are not as they should be, which I could not do when I was younger; I cannot, however, behave with perfect propriety at all times. First one and then another of these wicked people here keeps driving me out of my mind, and I have no one to stand by me. After all, however, this fight between Irus and the stranger did not turn out as the suitors meant it to do, for the stranger got the best of it. I wish Father Zeus, Athene, and Apollo would break the neck of every one of these wooers of yours, some inside the house and some out; and I wish they might all be as limp as Irus is over

yonder in the gate of the outer court. See how he nods his head like a drunken man; he has had such a thrashing that he cannot stand on his feet nor get back to his home, wherever that may be, for he has no strength left in him."

Thus did they converse. Eurymachus then came up and said, "Queen Penelope, daughter of Icarius, if all the Achaeans in Iasian Argos could see you at this moment, you would have still more suitors in your house by tomorrow morning, for you are the most admirable woman in the whole world both as regards personal beauty and strength of understanding."

To this Penelope replied, "Eurymachus, heaven robbed me of all my beauty whether of face or figure when the Argives set sail for Troy and my dear husband with them. If he were to return and look after my affairs, I should both be more respected and show a better presence to the world. As it is, I am oppressed with care, and with the afflictions which heaven has seen fit to heap upon me. My husband foresaw it all, and when he was leaving home he took my right wrist in his hand – 'Wife,' he said, 'we shall not all of us come safe home from Troy, for the Trojans fight well both with bow and spear. They are excellent also at fighting from chariots, and nothing decides the issue of a fight sooner than this. I know not, therefore, whether heaven will send me back to you, or whether I may not fall over there at Troy. In the meantime do you look after things here. Take care of my father and mother as at present, and even more so during my absence, but when you see our son growing a beard, then marry whom you will, and leave this your present home.' This is what he said and now it is all coming true. A night will come when I shall have to yield myself to a marriage which I detest, for Zeus has taken from me all hope of happiness. This further grief, moreover, cuts me to the very heart. You suitors are not wooing me after the custom of my country. When men are courting a woman who they think will be a good wife to them and who is of noble birth, and when they are each trying to win her for himself, they usually bring oxen and sheep to feast the friends of the lady, and they make her magnificent presents, instead of eating up other people's property without paying for it."

This was what she said, and Odysseus was glad when he heard her trying to get presents out of the suitors, and flattering them with fair words which he knew she did not mean.

Then Antinous said, “Queen Penelope, daughter of Icarius, take as many presents as you please from any one who will give them to you; it is not well to refuse a present; but we will not go about our business nor stir from where we are, till you have married the best man among us whoever he may be.”

The others applauded what Antinous had said, and each one sent his servant to bring his present. Antinous’ man returned with a large and lovely dress most exquisitely embroidered. It had twelve beautifully made brooch pins of pure gold with which to fasten it. Eurymachus immediately brought her a magnificent chain of gold and amber beads that gleamed like sunlight. Eurydamas’ two men returned with some earrings fashioned into three brilliant pendants which glistened most beautifully; while king Pisander son of Polyctor gave her a necklace of the rarest workmanship, and every one else brought her a beautiful present of some kind.

Then the queen went back to her room upstairs, and her maids brought the presents after her. Meanwhile the suitors took to singing and dancing, and stayed till evening came. They danced and sang till it grew dark; they then brought in three braziers to give light, and piled them up with chopped firewood very old and dry, and they lit torches from them, which the maids held up turn and turn about. Then Odysseus said:

“Maids, servants of Odysseus who has so long been absent, go to the queen inside the house; sit with her and amuse her, or spin, and pick wool. I will hold the light for all these people. They may stay till morning, but shall not beat me, for I can stand a great deal.”

The maids looked at one another and laughed, while pretty Melantho began to gibe at him contemptuously. She was daughter to Dolius, but had been brought up by Penelope, who used to give her toys to play with, and looked after her when she was a child; but in spite of all this she showed no consideration for the sorrows of her mistress, and used to misconduct herself with Eurymachus, with whom she was in love.

“Poor wretch,” said she, “are you gone clean out of your mind? Go and sleep in some smithy, or place of public gossips, instead of chattering here. Are you not ashamed of opening your mouth before your betters – so many of them too? Has the wine been getting into your head, or do you always babble in this way? You seem to have lost your wits because you beat the

tramp Irus; take care that a better man than he does not come and cudgel you about the head till he pack you bleeding out of the house."

"Vixen," replied Odysseus, scowling at her, "I will go and tell Telemachus what you have been saying, and he will have you torn limb from limb."

With these words he scared the women, and they went off into the body of the house. They trembled all over, for they thought he would do as he said. But Odysseus took his stand near the burning braziers, holding up torches and looking at the people – brooding the while on things that should surely come to pass.

But Athene would not let the suitors for one moment cease their insolence, for she wanted Odysseus to become even more bitter against them; she therefore set Eurymachus son of Polybus on to gibe at him, which made the others laugh. "Listen to me," said he, "you suitors of Queen Penelope, that I may speak even as I am minded. It is not for nothing that this man has come to the house of Odysseus; I believe the light has not been coming from the torches, but from his own head – for his hair is all gone, every bit of it."

Then turning to Odysseus he said, "Stranger, will you work as a servant, if I send you to the wolds and see that you are well paid? Can you build a stone fence, or plant trees? I will have you fed all the year round, and will find you in shoes and clothing. Will you go, then? Not you; for you have got into bad ways, and do not want to work; you had rather fill your belly by going round the country begging."

"Eurymachus," answered Odysseus, "if you and I were to work one against the other in early summer when the days are at their longest – give me a good scythe, and take another yourself, and let us see which will last the longer or mow the stronger, from dawn till dark when the mowing grass is about. Or if you will plough against me, let us each take a yoke of tawny oxen, well-mated and of great strength and endurance: turn me into a four acre field, and see whether you or I can drive the straighter furrow. If, again, war were to break out this day, give me a shield, a couple of spears and a helmet fitting well upon my temples – you would find me foremost in the fray, and would cease your gibes about my belly. You are insolent and cruel, and think yourself a great man because you live in a little world, and that a bad one. If Odysseus comes to his own again, the

doors of his house are wide, but you will find them narrow when you try to fly through them."

Eurymachus was furious at all this. He scowled at him and cried, "You wretch, I will soon pay you out for daring to say such things to me, and in public too. Has the wine been getting into your head or do you always babble in this way? You seem to have lost your wits because you beat the tramp Irus." With this he caught hold of a footstool, but Odysseus sought protection at the knees of Amphinomus of Dulichium, for he was afraid. The stool hit the cupbearer on his right hand and knocked him down: the man fell with a cry flat on his back, and his wine-jug fell ringing to the ground. The suitors in the covered cloister were now in an uproar, and one would turn towards his neighbour, saying, "I wish the stranger had gone somewhere else, bad luck to him, for all the trouble he gives us. We cannot permit such disturbance about a beggar; if such ill counsels are to prevail we shall have no more pleasure at our banquet."

On this Telemachus came forward and said, "Sirs, are you mad? Can you not carry your meat and your liquor decently? Some evil spirit has possessed you. I do not wish to drive any of you away, but you have had your suppers, and the sooner you all go home to bed the better."

The suitors bit their lips and marvelled at the boldness of his speech; but Amphinomus the son of Nisus, who was son to Aretias, said, "Do not let us take offence; it is reasonable, so let us make no answer. Neither let us do violence to the stranger nor to any of Odysseus' servants. Let the cupbearer go round with the drink-offerings, that we may make them and go home to our rest. As for the stranger, let us leave Telemachus to deal with him, for it is to his house that he has come."

Thus did he speak, and his saying pleased them well, so Mulius of Dulichium, servant to Amphinomus, mixed them a bowl of wine and water and handed it round to each of them man by man, whereon they made their drink-offerings to the blessed gods: Then, when they had made their drink-offerings and had drunk each one as he was minded, they took their several ways each of them to his own abode.

# Book 19

**ODYSSEUS WAS LEFT** in the cloister, pondering on the means whereby

with Athene's help he might be able to kill the suitors. Presently he said to Telemachus, "Telemachus, we must get the armour together and take it down inside. Make some excuse when the suitors ask you why you have removed it. Say that you have taken it to be out of the way of the smoke, inasmuch as it is no longer what it was when Odysseus went away, but has become soiled and begrimed with soot. Add to this more particularly that you are afraid Zeus may set them on to quarrel over their wine, and that they may do each other some harm which may disgrace both banquet and wooing, for the sight of arms sometimes tempts people to use them."

Telemachus approved of what his father had said, so he called nurse Euryclea and said, "Nurse, shut the women up in their room, while I take the armour that my father left behind him down into the store room. No one looks after it now my father is gone, and it has got all smirched with soot during my own boyhood. I want to take it down where the smoke cannot reach it."

"I wish, child," answered Euryclea, "that you would take the management of the house into your own hands altogether, and look after all the property yourself. But who is to go with you and light you to the store-room? The maids would have done so, but you would not let them."

"The stranger," said Telemachus, "shall show me a light; when people eat my bread they must earn it, no matter where they come from."

Euryclea did as she was told, and bolted the women inside their room. Then Odysseus and his son made all haste to take the helmets, shields, and spears inside; and Athene went before them with a gold lamp in her hand that shed a soft and brilliant radiance, whereon Telemachus said, "Father, my eyes behold a great marvel: the walls, with the rafters, crossbeams, and the supports on which they rest are all aglow as with a flaming fire. Surely there is some god here who has come down from heaven."

"Hush," answered Odysseus, "hold your peace and ask no questions, for this is the manner of the gods. Get you to your bed, and leave me here to talk with your mother and the maids. Your mother in her grief will ask me all sorts of questions."

On this Telemachus went by torch-light to the other side of the inner court, to the room in which he always slept. There he lay in his bed till morning, while Odysseus was left in the cloister pondering on the means whereby with Athene's help he might be able to kill the suitors.

Then Penelope came down from her room looking like Aphrodite or Artemis, and they set her a seat inlaid with scrolls of silver and ivory near the fire in her accustomed place. It had been made by Icmalius and had a footstool all in one piece with the seat itself; and it was covered with a thick fleece: on this she now sat, and the maids came from the women's room to join her. They set about removing the tables at which the wicked suitors had been dining, and took away the bread that was left, with the cups from which they had drunk. They emptied the embers out of the braziers, and heaped much wood upon them to give both light and heat; but Melantho began to rail at Odysseus a second time and said, "Stranger, do you mean to plague us by hanging about the house all night and spying upon the women? Be off, you wretch, outside, and eat your supper there, or you shall be driven out with a firebrand."

Odysseus scowled at her and answered, "My good woman, why should you be so angry with me? Is it because I am not clean, and my clothes are all in rags, and because I am obliged to go begging about after the manner of tramps and beggars generally? I too was a rich man once, and had a fine house of my own; in those days I gave to many a tramp such as I now am, no matter who he might be nor what he wanted. I had any number of servants, and all the other things which people have who live well and are accounted wealthy, but it pleased Zeus to take all away from me; therefore, woman, beware lest you too come to lose that pride and place in which you now wanton above your fellows; have a care lest you get out of favour with your mistress, and lest Odysseus should come home, for there is still a chance that he may do so. Moreover, though he be dead as you think he is, yet by Apollo's will he has left a son behind him, Telemachus, who will note anything done amiss by the maids in the house, for he is now no longer in his boyhood."

Penelope heard what he was saying and scolded the maid, "Impudent baggage," said she, "I see how abominably you are behaving, and you shall smart for it. You knew perfectly well, for I told you myself, that I was going to see the stranger and ask him about my husband, for whose sake I am in such continual sorrow."

Then she said to her head waiting woman Eurynome, "Bring a seat with a fleece upon it, for the stranger to sit upon while he tells his story, and listens to what I have to say. I wish to ask him some questions."

Eurynome brought the seat at once and set a fleece upon it, and as soon as Odysseus had sat down Penelope began by saying, “Stranger, I shall first ask you who and whence are you? Tell me of your town and parents.”

“Madam,” answered Odysseus, “who on the face of the whole earth can dare to chide with you? Your fame reaches the firmament of heaven itself; you are like some blameless king, who upholds righteousness, as the monarch over a great and valiant nation: the earth yields its wheat and barley, the trees are loaded with fruit, the ewes bring forth lambs, and the sea abounds with fish by reason of his virtues, and his people do good deeds under him. Nevertheless, as I sit here in your house, ask me some other question and do not seek to know my race and family, or you will recall memories that will yet more increase my sorrow. I am full of heaviness, but I ought not to sit weeping and wailing in another person’s house, nor is it well to be thus grieving continually. I shall have one of the servants or even yourself complaining of me, and saying that my eyes swim with tears because I am heavy with wine.”

Then Penelope answered, “Stranger, heaven robbed me of all beauty, whether of face or figure, when the Argives set sail for Troy and my dear husband with them. If he were to return and look after my affairs I should be both more respected and should show a better presence to the world. As it is, I am oppressed with care, and with the afflictions which heaven has seen fit to heap upon me. The chiefs from all our islands – Dulichium, Same, and Zacynthus, as also from Ithaca itself, are wooing me against my will and are wasting my estate. I can therefore show no attention to strangers, nor suppliants, nor to people who say that they are skilled artisans, but am all the time broken-hearted about Odysseus. They want me to marry again at once, and I have to invent stratagems in order to deceive them. In the first place heaven put it in my mind to set up a great tambour-frame in my room, and to begin working upon an enormous piece of fine needlework. Then I said to them, ‘Sweethearts, Odysseus is indeed dead, still, do not press me to marry again immediately; wait – for I would not have my skill in needlework perish unrecorded – till I have finished making a pall for the hero Laertes, to be ready against the time when death shall take him. He is very rich, and the women of the place will talk if he is laid out without a pall.’ This was what I said, and they assented; whereon I used to keep working at my great web all day long, but at night I

would unpick the stitches again by torch light. I fooled them in this way for three years without their finding it out, but as time wore on and I was now in my fourth year, in the waning of moons, and many days had been accomplished, those good for nothing hussies my maids betrayed me to the suitors, who broke in upon me and caught me; they were very angry with me, so I was forced to finish my work whether I would or no. And now I do not see how I can find any further shift for getting out of this marriage. My parents are putting great pressure upon me, and my son chafes at the ravages the suitors are making upon his estate, for he is now old enough to understand all about it and is perfectly able to look after his own affairs, for heaven has blessed him with an excellent disposition. Still, notwithstanding all this, tell me who you are and where you come from – for you must have had father and mother of some sort; you cannot be the son of an oak or of a rock."

Then Odysseus answered, "Madam, wife of Odysseus, since you persist in asking me about my family, I will answer, no matter what it costs me: people must expect to be pained when they have been exiles as long as I have, and suffered as much among as many peoples. Nevertheless, as regards your question I will tell you all you ask. There is a fair and fruitful island in mid-ocean called Crete; it is thickly peopled and there are ninety cities in it: the people speak many different languages which overlap one another, for there are Achaeans, brave Eteocretans, Dorians of three-fold race, and noble Pelasgi. There is a great town there, Cnossus, where Minos reigned who every nine years had a conference with Zeus himself. Minos was father to Deucalion, whose son I am, for Deucalion had two sons Idomeneus and myself. Idomeneus sailed for Troy, and I, who am the younger, am called Aethon; my brother, however, was at once the older and the more valiant of the two; hence it was in Crete that I saw Odysseus and showed him hospitality, for the winds took him there as he was on his way to Troy, carrying him out of his course from cape Malea and leaving him in Amnisus off the cave of Ilithuia, where the harbours are difficult to enter and he could hardly find shelter from the winds that were then raging. As soon as he got there he went into the town and asked for Idomeneus, claiming to be his old and valued friend, but Idomeneus had already set sail for Troy some ten or twelve days earlier, so I took him to my own house and showed him every kind of hospitality, for I had

abundance of everything. Moreover, I fed the men who were with him with barley meal from the public store, and got subscriptions of wine and oxen for them to sacrifice to their heart's content. They stayed with me twelve days, for there was a gale blowing from the North so strong that one could hardly keep one's feet on land. I suppose some unfriendly god had raised it for them, but on the thirteenth day the wind dropped, and they got away."

Many a plausible tale did Odysseus further tell her, and Penelope wept as she listened, for her heart was melted. As the snow wastes upon the mountain tops when the winds from South East and West have breathed upon it and thawed it till the rivers run bank full with water, even so did her cheeks overflow with tears for the husband who was all the time sitting by her side. Odysseus felt for her and was sorry for her, but he kept his eyes as hard as horn or iron without letting them so much as quiver, so cunningly did he restrain his tears. Then, when she had relieved herself by weeping, she turned to him again and said: "Now, stranger, I shall put you to the test and see whether or no you really did entertain my husband and his men, as you say you did. Tell me, then, how he was dressed, what kind of a man he was to look at, and so also with his companions."

"Madam," answered Odysseus, "it is such a long time ago that I can hardly say. Twenty years are come and gone since he left my home, and went elsewhither; but I will tell you as well as I can recollect. Odysseus wore a mantle of purple wool, double lined, and it was fastened by a gold brooch with two catches for the pin. On the face of this there was a device that shewed a dog holding a spotted fawn between his fore paws, and watching it as it lay panting upon the ground. Every one marvelled at the way in which these things had been done in gold, the dog looking at the fawn, and strangling it, while the fawn was struggling convulsively to escape. As for the shirt that he wore next his skin, it was so soft that it fitted him like the skin of an onion, and glistened in the sunlight to the admiration of all the women who beheld it. Furthermore I say, and lay my saying to your heart, that I do not know whether Odysseus wore these clothes when he left home, or whether one of his companions had given them to him while he was on his voyage; or possibly some one at whose house he was staying made him a present of them, for he was a man of many friends and had few equals among the Achaeans. I myself gave him a sword of bronze and a beautiful purple mantle, double lined, with a shirt

that went down to his feet, and I sent him on board his ship with every mark of honour. He had a servant with him, a little older than himself, and I can tell you what he was like; his shoulders were hunched, he was dark, and he had thick curly hair. His name was Eurybates, and Odysseus treated him with greater familiarity than he did any of the others, as being the most like-minded with himself."

Penelope was moved still more deeply as she heard the indisputable proofs that Odysseus laid before her; and when she had again found relief in tears she said to him, "Stranger, I was already disposed to pity you, but henceforth you shall be honoured and made welcome in my house. It was I who gave Odysseus the clothes you speak of. I took them out of the store room and folded them up myself, and I gave him also the gold brooch to wear as an ornament. Alas! I shall never welcome him home again. It was by an ill fate that he ever set out for that detested city whose very name I cannot bring myself even to mention."

Then Odysseus answered, "Madam, wife of Odysseus, do not disfigure yourself further by grieving thus bitterly for your loss, though I can hardly blame you for doing so. A woman who has loved her husband and borne him children, would naturally be grieved at losing him, even though he were a worse man than Odysseus, who they say was like a god. Still, cease your tears and listen to what I can tell you. I will hide nothing from you, and can say with perfect truth that I have lately heard of Odysseus as being alive and on his way home; he is among the Thesprotians, and is bringing back much valuable treasure that he has begged from one and another of them; but his ship and all his crew were lost as they were leaving the Thrinacian island, for Zeus and the sun-god were angry with him because his men had slaughtered the sun-god's cattle, and they were all drowned to a man. But Odysseus stuck to the keel of the ship and was drifted on to the land of the Phaeacians, who are near of kin to the immortals, and who treated him as though he had been a god, giving him many presents, and wishing to escort him home safe and sound. In fact Odysseus would have been here long ago, had he not thought better to go from land to land gathering wealth; for there is no man living who is so wily as he is; there is no one can compare with him. Pheidon king of the Thesprotians told me all this, and he swore to me – making drink-offerings in his house as he did so – that the ship was by the water side and the crew found who would

take Odysseus to his own country. He sent me off first, for there happened to be a Thesprotian ship sailing for the wheat-growing island of Dulichium, but he showed me all the treasure Odysseus had got together, and he had enough lying in the house of king Pheidon to keep his family for ten generations; but the king said Odysseus had gone to Dodona that he might learn Zeus's mind from the high oak tree, and know whether after so long an absence he should return to Ithaca openly or in secret. So you may know he is safe and will be here shortly; he is close at hand and cannot remain away from home much longer; nevertheless I will confirm my words with an oath, and call Zeus who is the first and mightiest of all gods to witness, as also that hearth of Odysseus to which I have now come, that all I have spoken shall surely come to pass. Odysseus will return in this self same year; with the end of this moon and the beginning of the next he will be here."

"May it be even so," answered Penelope; "if your words come true you shall have such gifts and such good will from me that all who see you shall congratulate you; but I know very well how it will be. Odysseus will not return, neither will you get your escort hence, for so surely as that Odysseus ever was, there are now no longer any such masters in the house as he was, to receive honourable strangers or to further them on their way home. And now, you maids, wash his feet for him, and make him a bed on a couch with rugs and blankets, that he may be warm and quiet till morning. Then, at day break wash him and anoint him again, that he may sit in the cloister and take his meals with Telemachus. It shall be the worse for any one of these hateful people who is uncivil to him; like it or not, he shall have no more to do in this house. For how, sir, shall you be able to learn whether or no I am superior to others of my sex both in goodness of heart and understanding, if I let you dine in my cloisters squalid and ill clad? Men live but for a little season; if they are hard, and deal hardly, people wish them ill so long as they are alive, and speak contemptuously of them when they are dead, but he that is righteous and deals righteously, the people tell of his praise among all lands, and many shall call him blessed."

Odysseus answered, "Madam, I have foresworn rugs and blankets from the day that I left the snowy ranges of Crete to go on shipboard. I will lie as I have lain on many a sleepless night hitherto. Night after night have I

passed in any rough sleeping place, and waited for morning. Nor, again, do I like having my feet washed; I shall not let any of the young hussies about your house touch my feet; but, if you have any old and respectable woman who has gone through as much trouble as I have, I will allow her to wash them."

To this Penelope said, "My dear sir, of all the guests who ever yet came to my house there never was one who spoke in all things with such admirable propriety as you do. There happens to be in the house a most respectable old woman – the same who received my poor dear husband in her arms the night he was born, and nursed him in infancy. She is very feeble now, but she shall wash your feet." "Come here," said she, "Euryclea, and wash your master's age-mate; I suppose Odysseus' hands and feet are very much the same now as his are, for trouble ages all of us dreadfully fast."

On these words the old woman covered her face with her hands; she began to weep and made lamentation saying, "My dear child, I cannot think whatever I am to do with you. I am certain no one was ever more god-fearing than yourself, and yet Zeus hates you. No one in the whole world ever burned him more thigh bones, nor gave him finer hecatombs when you prayed you might come to a green old age yourself and see your son grow up to take after you: yet see how he has prevented you alone from ever getting back to your own home. I have no doubt the women in some foreign palace which Odysseus has got to are gibing at him as all these sluts here have been gibing at you. I do not wonder at your not choosing to let them wash you after the manner in which they have insulted you; I will wash your feet myself gladly enough, as Penelope has said that I am to do so; I will wash them both for Penelope's sake and for your own, for you have raised the most lively feelings of compassion in my mind; and let me say this moreover, which pray attend to; we have had all kinds of strangers in distress come here before now, but I make bold to say that no one ever yet came who was so like Odysseus in figure, voice, and feet as you are."

"Those who have seen us both," answered Odysseus, "have always said we were wonderfully like each other, and now you have noticed it too."

Then the old woman took the cauldron in which she was going to wash his feet, and poured plenty of cold water into it, adding hot till the bath

was warm enough. Odysseus sat by the fire, but ere long he turned away from the light, for it occurred to him that when the old woman had hold of his leg she would recognise a certain scar which it bore, whereon the whole truth would come out. And indeed as soon as she began washing her master, she at once knew the scar as one that had been given him by a wild boar when he was hunting on Mt. Parnassus with his excellent grandfather Autolycus – who was the most accomplished thief and perjurer in the whole world – and with the sons of Autolycus. Hermes himself had endowed him with this gift, for he used to burn the thigh bones of goats and kids to him, so he took pleasure in his companionship. It happened once that Autolycus had gone to Ithaca and had found the child of his daughter just born. As soon as he had done supper Euryclea set the infant upon his knees and said, "Autolycus, you must find a name for your grandson; you greatly wished that you might have one."

"Son-in-law and daughter," replied Autolycus, "call the child thus: I am highly displeased with a large number of people in one place and another, both men and women; so name the child 'Odysseus,' or the child of anger. When he grows up and comes to visit his mother's family on Mt. Parnassus, where my possessions lie, I will make him a present and will send him on his way rejoicing."

Odysseus, therefore, went to Parnassus to get the presents from Autolycus, who with his sons shook hands with him and gave him welcome. His grandmother Amphithea threw her arms about him, and kissed his head, and both his beautiful eyes, while Autolycus desired his sons to get dinner ready, and they did as he told them. They brought in a five year old bull, flayed it, made it ready and divided it into joints; these they then cut carefully up into smaller pieces and spitted them; they roasted them sufficiently and served the portions round. Thus through the livelong day to the going down of the sun they feasted, and every man had his full share so that all were satisfied; but when the sun set and it came on dark, they went to bed and enjoyed the boon of sleep.

When the child of morning, rosy-fingered Dawn, appeared, the sons of Autolycus went out with their hounds hunting, and Odysseus went too. They climbed the wooded slopes of Parnassus and soon reached its breezy upland valleys; but as the sun was beginning to beat upon the fields, fresh-risen from the slow still currents of Oceanus, they came to a mountain

dell. The dogs were in front searching for the tracks of the beast they were chasing, and after them came the sons of Autolycus, among whom was Odysseus, close behind the dogs, and he had a long spear in his hand. Here was the lair of a huge boar among some thick brushwood, so dense that the wind and rain could not get through it, nor could the sun's rays pierce it, and the ground underneath lay thick with fallen leaves. The boar heard the noise of the men's feet, and the hounds baying on every side as the huntsmen came up to him, so he rushed from his lair, raised the bristles on his neck, and stood at bay with fire flashing from his eyes. Odysseus was the first to raise his spear and try to drive it into the brute, but the boar was too quick for him, and charged him sideways, ripping him above the knee with a gash that tore deep though it did not reach the bone. As for the boar, Odysseus hit him on the right shoulder, and the point of the spear went right through him, so that he fell groaning in the dust until the life went out of him. The sons of Autolycus busied themselves with the carcass of the boar, and bound Odysseus' wound; then, after saying a spell to stop the bleeding, they went home as fast as they could. But when Autolycus and his sons had thoroughly healed Odysseus, they made him some splendid presents, and sent him back to Ithaca with much mutual good will. When he got back, his father and mother were rejoiced to see him, and asked him all about it, and how he had hurt himself to get the scar; so he told them how the boar had ripped him when he was out hunting with Autolycus and his sons on Mt. Parnassus.

As soon as Euryclea had got the scarred limb in her hands and had well hold of it, she recognised it and dropped the foot at once. The leg fell into the bath, which rang out and was overturned, so that all the water was spilt on the ground; Euryclea's eyes between her joy and her grief filled with tears, and she could not speak, but she caught Odysseus by the beard and said, "My dear child, I am sure you must be Odysseus himself, only I did not know you till I had actually touched and handled you."

As she spoke she looked towards Penelope, as though wanting to tell her that her dear husband was in the house, but Penelope was unable to look in that direction and observe what was going on, for Athene had diverted her attention; so Odysseus caught Euryclea by the throat with his right hand and with his left drew her close to him, and said, "Nurse, do you wish to be the ruin of me, you who nursed me at your own breast, now that after

twenty years of wandering I am at last come to my own home again? Since it has been borne in upon you by heaven to recognise me, hold your tongue, and do not say a word about it to any one else in the house, for if you do I tell you – and it shall surely be – that if heaven grants me to take the lives of these suitors, I will not spare you, though you are my own nurse, when I am killing the other women."

"My child," answered Euryclea, "what are you talking about? You know very well that nothing can either bend or break me. I will hold my tongue like a stone or a piece of iron; furthermore let me say, and lay my saying to your heart, when heaven has delivered the suitors into your hand, I will give you a list of the women in the house who have been ill-behaved, and of those who are guiltless."

And Odysseus answered, "Nurse, you ought not to speak in that way; I am well able to form my own opinion about one and all of them; hold your tongue and leave everything to heaven."

As he said this Euryclea left the cloister to fetch some more water, for the first had been all spilt; and when she had washed him and anointed him with oil, Odysseus drew his seat nearer to the fire to warm himself, and hid the scar under his rags. Then Penelope began talking to him and said:

"Stranger, I should like to speak with you briefly about another matter. It is indeed nearly bed time – for those, at least, who can sleep in spite of sorrow. As for myself, heaven has given me a life of such unmeasurable woe, that even by day when I am attending to my duties and looking after the servants, I am still weeping and lamenting during the whole time; then, when night comes, and we all of us go to bed, I lie awake thinking, and my heart becomes a prey to the most incessant and cruel tortures. As the dun nightingale, daughter of Pandareus, sings in the early spring from her seat in shadiest covert hid, and with many a plaintive trill pours out the tale how by mishap she killed her own child Itylus, son of king Zethus, even so does my mind toss and turn in its uncertainty whether I ought to stay with my son here, and safeguard my substance, my bondsmen, and the greatness of my house, out of regard to public opinion and the memory of my late husband, or whether it is not now time for me to go with the best of these suitors who are wooing me and making me such magnificent presents. As long as my son was still young, and unable to understand, he would not hear of my leaving my husband's house, but now that he is full

grown he begs and prays me to do so, being incensed at the way in which the suitors are eating up his property. Listen, then, to a dream that I have had and interpret it for me if you can. I have twenty geese about the house that eat mash out of a trough, and of which I am exceedingly fond. I dreamed that a great eagle came swooping down from a mountain, and dug his curved beak into the neck of each of them till he had killed them all. Presently he soared off into the sky, and left them lying dead about the yard; whereon I wept in my dream till all my maids gathered round me, so piteously was I grieving because the eagle had killed my geese. Then he came back again, and perching on a projecting rafter spoke to me with human voice, and told me to leave off crying. 'Be of good courage,' he said, 'daughter of Icarius; this is no dream, but a vision of good omen that shall surely come to pass. The geese are the suitors, and I am no longer an eagle, but your own husband, who am come back to you, and who will bring these suitors to a disgraceful end.' On this I woke, and when I looked out I saw my geese at the trough eating their mash as usual."

"This dream, Madam," replied Odysseus, "can admit but of one interpretation, for had not Odysseus himself told you how it shall be fulfilled? The death of the suitors is portended, and not one single one of them will escape."

And Penelope answered, "Stranger, dreams are very curious and unaccountable things, and they do not by any means invariably come true. There are two gates through which these unsubstantial fancies proceed; the one is of horn, and the other ivory. Those that come through the gate of ivory are fatuous, but those from the gate of horn mean something to those that see them. I do not think, however, that my own dream came through the gate of horn, though I and my son should be most thankful if it proves to have done so. Furthermore I say – and lay my saying to your heart – the coming dawn will usher in the ill-omened day that is to sever me from the house of Odysseus, for I am about to hold a tournament of axes. My husband used to set up twelve axes in the court, one in front of the other, like the stays upon which a ship is built; he would then go back from them and shoot an arrow through the whole twelve. I shall make the suitors try to do the same thing, and whichever of them can string the bow most easily, and send his arrow through all the twelve axes, him will I follow,

and quit this house of my lawful husband, so goodly and so abounding in wealth. But even so, I doubt not that I shall remember it in my dreams."

Then Odysseus answered, "Madam, wife of Odysseus, you need not defer your tournament, for Odysseus will return ere ever they can string the bow, handle it how they will, and send their arrows through the iron."

To this Penelope said, "As long, sir, as you will sit here and talk to me, I can have no desire to go to bed. Still, people cannot do permanently without sleep, and heaven has appointed us dwellers on earth a time for all things. I will therefore go upstairs and recline upon that couch which I have never ceased to flood with my tears from the day Odysseus set out for the city with a hateful name."

She then went upstairs to her own room, not alone, but attended by her maidens, and when there, she lamented her dear husband till Athene shed sweet sleep over her eyelids.

# Book 20

**ODYSSEUS SLEPT** in the cloister upon an undressed bullock's hide, on the top of which he threw several skins of the sheep the suitors had eaten, and Eurynome threw a cloak over him after he had laid himself down. There, then, Odysseus lay wakefully brooding upon the way in which he should kill the suitors; and by and by, the women who had been in the habit of misconducting themselves with them, left the house giggling and laughing with one another. This made Odysseus very angry, and he doubted whether to get up and kill every single one of them then and there, or to let them sleep one more and last time with the suitors. His heart growled within him, and as a bitch with puppies growls and shows her teeth when she sees a stranger, so did his heart growl with anger at the evil deeds that were being done: but he beat his breast and said, "Heart, be still, you had worse than this to bear on the day when the terrible Cyclops ate your brave companions; yet you bore it in silence till your cunning got you safe out of the cave, though you made sure of being killed."

Thus he chided with his heart, and checked it into endurance, but he tossed about as one who turns a paunch full of blood and fat in front of a hot fire, doing it first on one side and then on the other, that he may get it cooked as soon as possible, even so did he turn himself about from side to

side, thinking all the time how, single handed as he was, he should contrive to kill so large a body of men as the wicked suitors. But by and by Athene came down from heaven in the likeness of a woman, and hovered over his head saying, “My poor unhappy man, why do you lie awake in this way? This is your house: your wife is safe inside it, and so is your son who is just such a young man as any father may be proud of.”

“Goddess,” answered Odysseus, “all that you have said is true, but I am in some doubt as to how I shall be able to kill these wicked suitors single handed, seeing what a number of them there always are. And there is this further difficulty, which is still more considerable. Supposing that with Zeus’s and your assistance I succeed in killing them, I must ask you to consider where I am to escape to from their avengers when it is all over.”

“For shame,” replied Athene, “why, any one else would trust a worse ally than myself, even though that ally were only a mortal and less wise than I am. Am I not a goddess, and have I not protected you throughout in all your troubles? I tell you plainly that even though there were fifty bands of men surrounding us and eager to kill us, you should take all their sheep and cattle, and drive them away with you. But go to sleep; it is a very bad thing to lie awake all night, and you shall be out of your troubles before long.”

As she spoke she shed sleep over his eyes, and then went back to Olympus.

While Odysseus was thus yielding himself to a very deep slumber that eased the burden of his sorrows, his admirable wife awoke, and sitting up in her bed began to cry. When she had relieved herself by weeping she prayed to Artemis saying, “Great Goddess Artemis, daughter of Zeus, drive an arrow into my heart and slay me; or let some whirlwind snatch me up and bear me through paths of darkness till it drop me into the mouths of over-flowing Oceanus, as it did the daughters of Pandareus. The daughters of Pandareus lost their father and mother, for the gods killed them, so they were left orphans. But Aphrodite took care of them, and fed them on cheese, honey, and sweet wine. Hera taught them to excel all women in beauty of form and understanding; Artemis gave them an imposing presence, and Athene endowed them with every kind of accomplishment; but one day when Aphrodite had gone up to Olympus to see Zeus about getting them married (for well does he know both what

shall happen and what not happen to every one) the storm winds came and spirited them away to become handmaids to the dread Erinyes. Even so I wish that the gods who live in heaven would hide me from mortal sight, or that fair Artemis might strike me, for I would fain go even beneath the sad earth if I might do so still looking towards Odysseus only, and without having to yield myself to a worse man than he was. Besides, no matter how much people may grieve by day, they can put up with it so long as they can sleep at night, for when the eyes are closed in slumber people forget good and ill alike; whereas my misery haunts me even in my dreams. This very night methought there was one lying by my side who was like Odysseus as he was when he went away with his host, and I rejoiced, for I believed that it was no dream, but the very truth itself."

On this the day broke, but Odysseus heard the sound of her weeping, and it puzzled him, for it seemed as though she already knew him and was by his side. Then he gathered up the cloak and the fleeces on which he had lain, and set them on a seat in the cloister, but he took the bullock's hide out into the open. He lifted up his hands to heaven, and prayed, saying "Father Zeus, since you have seen fit to bring me over land and sea to my own home after all the afflictions you have laid upon me, give me a sign out of the mouth of some one or other of those who are now waking within the house, and let me have another sign of some kind from outside."

Thus did he pray. Zeus heard his prayer and forthwith thundered high up among the clouds from the splendour of Olympus, and Odysseus was glad when he heard it. At the same time within the house, a miller-woman from hard by in the mill room lifted up her voice and gave him another sign. There were twelve miller-women whose business it was to grind wheat and barley which are the staff of life. The others had ground their task and had gone to take their rest, but this one had not yet finished, for she was not so strong as they were, and when she heard the thunder she stopped grinding and gave the sign to her master. "Father Zeus," said she, "you, who rule over heaven and earth, you have thundered from a clear sky without so much as a cloud in it, and this means something for somebody; grant the prayer, then, of me your poor servant who calls upon you, and let this be the very last day that the suitors dine in the house of Odysseus. They have worn me out with labour of grinding meal for them, and I hope they may never have another dinner anywhere at all."

Odysseus was glad when he heard the omens conveyed to him by the woman's speech, and by the thunder, for he knew they meant that he should avenge himself on the suitors.

Then the other maids in the house rose and lit the fire on the hearth; Telemachus also rose and put on his clothes. He girded his sword about his shoulder, bound his sandals on to his comely feet, and took a doughty spear with a point of sharpened bronze; then he went to the threshold of the cloister and said to Euryclea, "Nurse, did you make the stranger comfortable both as regards bed and board, or did you let him shift for himself? – for my mother, good woman though she is, has a way of paying great attention to second-rate people, and of neglecting others who are in reality much better men."

"Do not find fault child," said Euryclea, "when there is no one to find fault with. The stranger sat and drank his wine as long as he liked: your mother did ask him if he would take any more bread and he said he would not. When he wanted to go to bed she told the servants to make one for him, but he said he was such a wretched outcast that he would not sleep on a bed and under blankets; he insisted on having an undressed bullock's hide and some sheepskins put for him in the cloister and I threw a cloak over him myself."

Then Telemachus went out of the court to the place where the Achaeans were meeting in assembly; he had his spear in his hand, and he was not alone, for his two dogs went with him. But Euryclea called the maids and said, "Come, wake up; set about sweeping the cloisters and sprinkling them with water to lay the dust; put the covers on the seats; wipe down the tables, some of you, with a wet sponge; clean out the mixing-jugs and the cups, and go for water from the fountain at once; the suitors will be here directly; they will be here early, for it is a feast day."

Thus did she speak, and they did even as she had said: twenty of them went to the fountain for water, and the others set themselves busily to work about the house. The men who were in attendance on the suitors also came up and began chopping firewood. By and by the women returned from the fountain, and the swineherd came after them with the three best pigs he could pick out. These he let feed about the premises, and then he said good-humouredly to Odysseus, "Stranger, are the suitors treating you any better now, or are they as insolent as ever?"

“May heaven,” answered Odysseus, “requite to them the wickedness with which they deal high-handedly in another man’s house without any sense of shame.”

Thus did they converse; meanwhile Melanthius the goatherd came up, for he too was bringing in his best goats for the suitors’ dinner; and he had two shepherds with him. They tied the goats up under the gatehouse, and then Melanthius began gibing at Odysseus. “Are you still here, stranger,” said he, “to pester people by begging about the house? Why can you not go elsewhere? You and I shall not come to an understanding before we have given each other a taste of our fists. You beg without any sense of decency: are there not feasts elsewhere among the Achaeans, as well as here?”

Odysseus made no answer, but bowed his head and brooded. Then a third man, Philoetius, joined them, who was bringing in a barren heifer and some goats. These were brought over by the boatmen who are there to take people over when any one comes to them. So Philoetius made his heifer and his goats secure under the gatehouse, and then went up to the swineherd. “Who, Swineherd,” said he, “is this stranger that is lately come here? Is he one of your men? What is his family? Where does he come from? Poor fellow, he looks as if he had been some great man, but the gods give sorrow to whom they will – even to kings if it so pleases them.”

As he spoke he went up to Odysseus and saluted him with his right hand; “Good day to you, father stranger,” said he, “you seem to be very poorly off now, but I hope you will have better times by and by. Father Zeus, of all gods you are the most malicious. We are your own children, yet you show us no mercy in all our misery and afflictions. A sweat came over me when I saw this man, and my eyes filled with tears, for he reminds me of Odysseus, who I fear is going about in just such rags as this man’s are, if indeed he is still among the living. If he is already dead and in the house of Hades, then, alas! for my good master, who made me his stockman when I was quite young among the Cephallenians, and now his cattle are countless; no one could have done better with them than I have, for they have bred like ears of corn; nevertheless I have to keep bringing them in for others to eat, who take no heed to his son though he is in the house, and fear not the wrath of heaven, but are already eager to divide Odysseus’ property among them because he has been away so long. I have often thought – only it would not be right while his son is living – of going off

with the cattle to some foreign country; bad as this would be, it is still harder to stay here and be ill-treated about other people's herds. My position is intolerable, and I should long since have run away and put myself under the protection of some other chief, only that I believe my poor master will yet return, and send all these suitors flying out of the house."

"Stockman," answered Odysseus, "you seem to be a very well-disposed person, and I can see that you are a man of sense. Therefore I will tell you, and will confirm my words with an oath. By Zeus, the chief of all gods, and by that hearth of Odysseus to which I am now come, Odysseus shall return before you leave this place, and if you are so minded you shall see him killing the suitors who are now masters here."

"If Zeus were to bring this to pass," replied the stockman, "you should see how I would do my very utmost to help him."

And in like manner Eumaeus prayed that Odysseus might return home.

Thus did they converse. Meanwhile the suitors were hatching a plot to murder Telemachus: but a bird flew near them on their left hand – an eagle with a dove in its talons. On this Amphinomus said, "My friends, this plot of ours to murder Telemachus will not succeed; let us go to dinner instead."

The others assented, so they went inside and laid their cloaks on the benches and seats. They sacrificed the sheep, goats, pigs, and the heifer, and when the inward meats were cooked they served them round. They mixed the wine in the mixing-bowls, and the swineherd gave every man his cup, while Philoetius handed round the bread in the bread baskets, and Melanthius poured them out their wine. Then they laid their hands upon the good things that were before them.

Telemachus purposely made Odysseus sit in the part of the cloister that was paved with stone; he gave him a shabby looking seat at a little table to himself, and had his portion of the inward meats brought to him, with his wine in a gold cup. "Sit there," said he, "and drink your wine among the great people. I will put a stop to the gibes and blows of the suitors, for this is no public house, but belongs to Odysseus, and has passed from him to me. Therefore, suitors, keep your hands and your tongues to yourselves, or there will be mischief."

The suitors bit their lips, and marvelled at the boldness of his speech; then Antinous said, “We do not like such language but we will put up with it, for Telemachus is threatening us in good earnest. If Zeus had let us we should have put a stop to his brave talk ere now.”

Thus spoke Antinous, but Telemachus heeded him not. Meanwhile the heralds were bringing the holy hecatomb through the city, and the Achaeans gathered under the shady grove of Apollo.

Then they roasted the outer meat, drew it off the spits, gave every man his portion, and feasted to their heart’s content; those who waited at table gave Odysseus exactly the same portion as the others had, for Telemachus had told them to do so.

But Athene would not let the suitors for one moment drop their insolence, for she wanted Odysseus to become still more bitter against them. Now there happened to be among them a ribald fellow, whose name was Ctesippus, and who came from Same. This man, confident in his great wealth, was paying court to the wife of Odysseus, and said to the suitors, “Hear what I have to say. The stranger has already had as large a portion as any one else; this is well, for it is not right nor reasonable to ill-treat any guest of Telemachus who comes here. I will, however, make him a present on my own account, that he may have something to give to the bath-woman, or to some other of Odysseus’ servants.”

As he spoke he picked up a heifer’s foot from the meat-basket in which it lay, and threw it at Odysseus, but Odysseus turned his head a little aside, and avoided it, smiling grimly Sardinian fashion as he did so, and it hit the wall, not him. On this Telemachus spoke fiercely to Ctesippus, “It is a good thing for you,” said he, “that the stranger turned his head so that you missed him. If you had hit him I should have run you through with my spear, and your father would have had to see about getting you buried rather than married in this house. So let me have no more unseemly behaviour from any of you, for I am grown up now to the knowledge of good and evil and understand what is going on, instead of being the child that I have been heretofore. I have long seen you killing my sheep and making free with my corn and wine: I have put up with this, for one man is no match for many, but do me no further violence. Still, if you wish to kill me, kill me; I would far rather die than see such disgraceful scenes day

after day – guests insulted, and men dragging the women servants about the house in an unseemly way."

They all held their peace till at last Agelaus son of Damastor said, "No one should take offence at what has just been said, nor gainsay it, for it is quite reasonable. Leave off, therefore, ill-treating the stranger, or any one else of the servants who are about the house; I would say, however, a friendly word to Telemachus and his mother, which I trust may commend itself to both. 'As long,' I would say, 'as you had ground for hoping that Odysseus would one day come home, no one could complain of your waiting and suffering the suitors to be in your house. It would have been better that he should have returned, but it is now sufficiently clear that he will never do so; therefore talk all this quietly over with your mother, and tell her to marry the best man, and the one who makes her the most advantageous offer. Thus you will yourself be able to manage your own inheritance, and to eat and drink in peace, while your mother will look after some other man's house, not yours.'"

To this Telemachus answered, "By Zeus, Agelaus, and by the sorrows of my unhappy father, who has either perished far from Ithaca, or is wandering in some distant land, I throw no obstacles in the way of my mother's marriage; on the contrary I urge her to choose whomsoever she will, and I will give her numberless gifts into the bargain, but I dare not insist point blank that she shall leave the house against her own wishes. Heaven forbid that I should do this."

Athene now made the suitors fall to laughing immoderately, and set their wits wandering; but they were laughing with a forced laughter. Their meat became smeared with blood; their eyes filled with tears, and their hearts were heavy with forebodings. Theoclymenus saw this and said, "Unhappy men, what is it that ails you? There is a shroud of darkness drawn over you from head to foot, your cheeks are wet with tears; the air is alive with wailing voices; the walls and roof-beams drip blood; the gate of the cloisters and the court beyond them are full of ghosts trooping down into the night of hell; the sun is blotted out of heaven, and a blighting gloom is over all the land."

Thus did he speak, and they all of them laughed heartily. Eurymachus then said, "This stranger who has lately come here has lost his senses. Servants, turn him out into the streets, since he finds it so dark here."

But Theoclymenus said, “Eurymachus, you need not send any one with me. I have eyes, ears, and a pair of feet of my own, to say nothing of an understanding mind. I will take these out of the house with me, for I see mischief overhanging you, from which not one of you men who are insulting people and plotting ill deeds in the house of Odysseus will be able to escape.”

He left the house as he spoke, and went back to Piraeus who gave him welcome, but the suitors kept looking at one another and provoking Telemachus by laughing at the strangers. One insolent fellow said to him, “Telemachus, you are not happy in your guests; first you have this importunate tramp, who comes begging bread and wine and has no skill for work or for hard fighting, but is perfectly useless, and now here is another fellow who is setting himself up as a prophet. Let me persuade you, for it will be much better to put them on board ship and send them off to the Sicels to sell for what they will bring.”

Telemachus gave him no heed, but sate silently watching his father, expecting every moment that he would begin his attack upon the suitors.

Meanwhile the daughter of Icarius, wise Penelope, had had a rich seat placed for her facing the court and cloisters, so that she could hear what every one was saying. The dinner indeed had been prepared amid much merriment; it had been both good and abundant, for they had sacrificed many victims; but the supper was yet to come, and nothing can be conceived more gruesome than the meal which a goddess and a brave man were soon to lay before them – for they had brought their doom upon themselves.

# Book 21

**ATHENE NOW** put it in Penelope’s mind to make the suitors try their skill with the bow and with the iron axes, in contest among themselves, as a means of bringing about their destruction. She went upstairs and got the store-room key, which was made of bronze and had a handle of ivory; she then went with her maidens into the store-room at the end of the house, where her husband’s treasures of gold, bronze, and wrought iron were kept, and where was also his bow, and the quiver full of deadly arrows that had been given him by a friend whom he had met in Lacedaemon – Iphitus the

son of Eurytus. The two fell in with one another in Messene at the house of Ortilochus, where Odysseus was staying in order to recover a debt that was owing from the whole people; for the Messenians had carried off three hundred sheep from Ithaca, and had sailed away with them and with their shepherds. In quest of these Odysseus took a long journey while still quite young, for his father and the other chieftains sent him on a mission to recover them. Iphitus had gone there also to try and get back twelve brood mares that he had lost, and the mule foals that were running with them. These mares were the death of him in the end, for when he went to the house of Zeus's son, mighty Heracles, who performed such prodigies of valour, Heracles to his shame killed him, though he was his guest, for he feared not heaven's vengeance, nor yet respected his own table which he had set before Iphitus, but killed him in spite of everything, and kept the mares himself. It was when claiming these that Iphitus met Odysseus, and gave him the bow which mighty Eurytus had been used to carry, and which on his death had been left by him to his son. Odysseus gave him in return a sword and a spear, and this was the beginning of a fast friendship, although they never visited at one another's houses, for Zeus's son Heracles killed Iphitus ere they could do so. This bow, then, given him by Iphitus, had not been taken with him by Odysseus when he sailed for Troy; he had used it so long as he had been at home, but had left it behind as having been a keepsake from a valued friend.

Penelope presently reached the oak threshold of the store-room; the carpenter had planed this duly, and had drawn a line on it so as to get it quite straight; he had then set the door posts into it and hung the doors. She loosed the strap from the handle of the door, put in the key, and drove it straight home to shoot back the bolts that held the doors; these flew open with a noise like a bull bellowing in a meadow, and Penelope stepped upon the raised platform, where the chests stood in which the fair linen and clothes were laid by along with fragrant herbs: reaching thence, she took down the bow with its bow case from the peg on which it hung. She sat down with it on her knees, weeping bitterly as she took the bow out of its case, and when her tears had relieved her, she went to the cloister where the suitors were, carrying the bow and the quiver, with the many deadly arrows that were inside it. Along with her came her maidens, bearing a chest that contained much iron and bronze which her husband had won as

prizes. When she reached the suitors, she stood by one of the bearing-posts supporting the roof of the cloister, holding a veil before her face, and with a maid on either side of her. Then she said:

"Listen to me you suitors, who persist in abusing the hospitality of this house because its owner has been long absent, and without other pretext than that you want to marry me; this, then, being the prize that you are contending for, I will bring out the mighty bow of Odysseus, and whomsoever of you shall string it most easily and send his arrow through each one of twelve axes, him will I follow and quit this house of my lawful husband, so goodly, and so abounding in wealth. But even so I doubt not that I shall remember it in my dreams."

As she spoke, she told Eumaeus to set the bow and the pieces of iron before the suitors, and Eumaeus wept as he took them to do as she had bidden him. Hard by, the stockman wept also when he saw his master's bow, but Antinous scolded them. "You country louts," said he, "silly simpletons; why should you add to the sorrows of your mistress by crying in this way? She has enough to grieve her in the loss of her husband; sit still, therefore, and eat your dinners in silence, or go outside if you want to cry, and leave the bow behind you. We suitors shall have to contend for it with might and main, for we shall find it no light matter to string such a bow as this is. There is not a man of us all who is such another as Odysseus; for I have seen him and remember him, though I was then only a child."

This was what he said, but all the time he was expecting to be able to string the bow and shoot through the iron, whereas in fact he was to be the first that should taste of the arrows from the hands of Odysseus, whom he was dishonouring in his own house – egging the others on to do so also.

Then Telemachus spoke. "Great heavens!" he exclaimed, "Zeus must have robbed me of my senses. Here is my dear and excellent mother saying she will quit this house and marry again, yet I am laughing and enjoying myself as though there were nothing happening. But, suitors, as the contest has been agreed upon, let it go forward. It is for a woman whose peer is not to be found in Pylos, Argos, or Mycene, nor yet in Ithaca nor on the mainland. You know this as well as I do; what need have I to speak in praise of my mother? Come on, then, make no excuses for delay, but let us see whether you can string the bow or no. I too will make trial of

it, for if I can string it and shoot through the iron, I shall not suffer my mother to quit this house with a stranger, not if I can win the prizes which my father won before me."

As he spoke he sprang from his seat, threw his crimson cloak from him, and took his sword from his shoulder. First he set the axes in a row, in a long groove which he had dug for them, and had made straight by line. Then he stamped the earth tight round them, and everyone was surprised when they saw him set them up so orderly, though he had never seen anything of the kind before. This done, he went on to the pavement to make trial of the bow; thrice did he tug at it, trying with all his might to draw the string, and thrice he had to leave off, though he had hoped to string the bow and shoot through the iron. He was trying for the fourth time, and would have strung it had not Odysseus made a sign to check him in spite of all his eagerness. So he said:

"Alas! I shall either be always feeble and of no prowess, or I am too young, and have not yet reached my full strength so as to be able to hold my own if any one attacks me. You others, therefore, who are stronger than I, make trial of the bow and get this contest settled."

On this he put the bow down, letting it lean against the door that led into the house with the arrow standing against the top of the bow. Then he sat down on the seat from which he had risen, and Antinous said:

"Come on each of you in his turn, going towards the right from the place at which the cupbearer begins when he is handing round the wine."

The rest agreed, and Leiodes son of Oenops was the first to rise. He was sacrificial priest to the suitors, and sat in the corner near the mixing-bowl. He was the only man who hated their evil deeds and was indignant with the others. He was now the first to take the bow and arrow, so he went on to the pavement to make his trial, but he could not string the bow, for his hands were weak and unused to hard work, they therefore soon grew tired, and he said to the suitors, "My friends, I cannot string it; let another have it, this bow shall take the life and soul out of many a chief among us, for it is better to die than to live after having missed the prize that we have so long striven for, and which has brought us so long together. Some one of us is even now hoping and praying that he may marry Penelope, but when he has seen this bow and tried it, let him woo and make bridal offerings to

some other woman, and let Penelope marry whoever makes her the best offer and whose lot it is to win her."

On this he put the bow down, letting it lean against the door, with the arrow standing against the tip of the bow. Then he took his seat again on the seat from which he had risen; and Antinous rebuked him saying:

"Leiodes, what are you talking about? Your words are monstrous and intolerable; it makes me angry to listen to you. Shall, then, this bow take the life of many a chief among us, merely because you cannot bend it yourself? True, you were not born to be an archer, but there are others who will soon string it."

Then he said to Melanthius the goatherd, "Look sharp, light a fire in the court, and set a seat hard by with a sheep skin on it; bring us also a large ball of lard, from what they have in the house. Let us warm the bow and grease it – we will then make trial of it again, and bring the contest to an end."

Melanthius lit the fire, and set a seat covered with sheep skins beside it. He also brought a great ball of lard from what they had in the house, and the suitors warmed the bow and again made trial of it, but they were none of them nearly strong enough to string it. Nevertheless there still remained Antinous and Eurymachus, who were the ringleaders among the suitors and much the foremost among them all.

Then the swineherd and the stockman left the cloisters together, and Odysseus followed them. When they had got outside the gates and the outer yard, Odysseus said to them quietly:

"Stockman, and you swineherd, I have something in my mind which I am in doubt whether to say or no; but I think I will say it. What manner of men would you be to stand by Odysseus, if some god should bring him back here all of a sudden? Say which you are disposed to do – to side with the suitors, or with Odysseus?"

"Father Zeus," answered the stockman, "would indeed that you might so ordain it. If some god were but to bring Odysseus back, you should see with what might and main I would fight for him."

In like words Eumaeus prayed to all the gods that Odysseus might return; when, therefore, he saw for certain what mind they were of, Odysseus said, "It is I, Odysseus, who am here. I have suffered much, but at last, in the twentieth year, I am come back to my own country. I find that you two

alone of all my servants are glad that I should do so, for I have not heard any of the others praying for my return. To you two, therefore, will I unfold the truth as it shall be. If heaven shall deliver the suitors into my hands, I will find wives for both of you, will give you house and holding close to my own, and you shall be to me as though you were brothers and friends of Telemachus. I will now give you convincing proofs that you may know me and be assured. See, here is the scar from the boar's tooth that ripped me when I was out hunting on Mt. Parnassus with the sons of Autolycus."

As he spoke he drew his rags aside from the great scar, and when they had examined it thoroughly, they both of them wept about Odysseus, threw their arms round him, and kissed his head and shoulders, while Odysseus kissed their hands and faces in return. The sun would have gone down upon their mourning if Odysseus had not checked them and said:

"Cease your weeping, lest some one should come outside and see us, and tell those who are within. When you go in, do so separately, not both together; I will go first, and do you follow afterwards; let this moreover be the token between us; the suitors will all of them try to prevent me from getting hold of the bow and quiver; do you, therefore, Eumaeus, place it in my hands when you are carrying it about, and tell the women to close the doors of their apartment. If they hear any groaning or uproar as of men fighting about the house, they must not come out; they must keep quiet, and stay where they are at their work. And I charge you, Philoetius, to make fast the doors of the outer court, and to bind them securely at once."

When he had thus spoken, he went back to the house and took the seat that he had left. Presently, his two servants followed him inside.

At this moment the bow was in the hands of Eurymachus, who was warming it by the fire, but even so he could not string it, and he was greatly grieved. He heaved a deep sigh and said, "I grieve for myself and for us all; I grieve that I shall have to forgo the marriage, but I do not care nearly so much about this, for there are plenty of other women in Ithaca and elsewhere; what I feel most is the fact of our being so inferior to Odysseus in strength that we cannot string his bow. This will disgrace us in the eyes of those who are yet unborn."

"It shall not be so, Eurymachus," said Antinous, "and you know it yourself. Today is the feast of Apollo throughout all the land; who can

string a bow on such a day as this? Put it on one side – as for the axes they can stay where they are, for no one is likely to come to the house and take them away: let the cupbearer go round with his cups, that we may make our drink-offerings and drop this matter of the bow; we will tell Melanthius to bring us in some goats tomorrow – the best he has; we can then offer thigh bones to Apollo the mighty archer, and again make trial of the bow, so as to bring the contest to an end."

The rest approved his words, and thereon men servants poured water over the hands of the guests, while pages filled the mixing-bowls with wine and water and handed it round after giving every man his drink-offering. Then, when they had made their offerings and had drunk each as much as he desired, Odysseus craftily said:

"Suitors of the illustrious queen, listen that I may speak even as I am minded. I appeal more especially to Eurymachus, and to Antinous who has just spoken with so much reason. Cease shooting for the present and leave the matter to the gods, but in the morning let heaven give victory to whom it will. For the moment, however, give me the bow that I may prove the power of my hands among you all, and see whether I still have as much strength as I used to have, or whether travel and neglect have made an end of it."

This made them all very angry, for they feared he might string the bow, Antinous therefore rebuked him fiercely saying, "Wretched creature, you have not so much as a grain of sense in your whole body; you ought to think yourself lucky in being allowed to dine unharmed among your betters, without having any smaller portion served you than we others have had, and in being allowed to hear our conversation. No other beggar or stranger has been allowed to hear what we say among ourselves; the wine must have been doing you a mischief, as it does with all those who drink immoderately. It was wine that inflamed the Centaur Eurytion when he was staying with Peirithous among the Lapithae. When the wine had got into his head, he went mad and did ill deeds about the house of Peirithous; this angered the heroes who were there assembled, so they rushed at him and cut off his ears and nostrils; then they dragged him through the doorway out of the house, so he went away crazed, and bore the burden of his crime, bereft of understanding. Henceforth, therefore, there was war between mankind and the centaurs, but he brought it upon himself through

his own drunkenness. In like manner I can tell you that it will go hardly with you if you string the bow: you will find no mercy from any one here, for we shall at once ship you off to king Echetus, who kills every one that comes near him: you will never get away alive, so drink and keep quiet without getting into a quarrel with men younger than yourself."

Penelope then spoke to him. "Antinous," said she, "it is not right that you should ill-treat any guest of Telemachus who comes to this house. If the stranger should prove strong enough to string the mighty bow of Odysseus, can you suppose that he would take me home with him and make me his wife? Even the man himself can have no such idea in his mind: none of you need let that disturb his feasting; it would be out of all reason."

"Queen Penelope," answered Eurymachus, "we do not suppose that this man will take you away with him; it is impossible; but we are afraid lest some of the baser sort, men or women among the Achaeans, should go gossiping about and say, 'These suitors are a feeble folk; they are paying court to the wife of a brave man whose bow not one of them was able to string, and yet a beggarly tramp who came to the house strung it at once and sent an arrow through the iron.' This is what will be said, and it will be a scandal against us."

"Eurymachus," Penelope answered, "people who persist in eating up the estate of a great chieftain and dishonouring his house must not expect others to think well of them. Why then should you mind if men talk as you think they will? This stranger is strong and well-built, he says moreover that he is of noble birth. Give him the bow, and let us see whether he can string it or no. I say – and it shall surely be – that if Apollo vouchsafes him the glory of stringing it, I will give him a cloak and shirt of good wear, with a javelin to keep off dogs and robbers, and a sharp sword. I will also give him sandals, and will see him sent safely wherever he wants to go."

Then Telemachus said, "Mother, I am the only man either in Ithaca or in the islands that are over against Elis who has the right to let any one have the bow or to refuse it. No one shall force me one way or the other, not even though I choose to make the stranger a present of the bow outright, and let him take it away with him. Go, then, within the house and busy yourself with your daily duties, your loom, your distaff, and the ordering

of your servants. This bow is a man's matter, and mine above all others, for it is I who am master here."

She went wondering back into the house, and laid her son's saying in her heart. Then going upstairs with her handmaids into her room, she mourned her dear husband till Athene sent sweet sleep over her eyelids.

The swineherd now took up the bow and was for taking it to Odysseus, but the suitors clamoured at him from all parts of the cloisters, and one of them said, "You idiot, where are you taking the bow to? Are you out of your wits? If Apollo and the other gods will grant our prayer, your own boarhounds shall get you into some quiet little place, and worry you to death."

Eumaeus was frightened at the outcry they all raised, so he put the bow down then and there, but Telemachus shouted out at him from the other side of the cloisters, and threatened him saying, "Father Eumaeus, bring the bow on in spite of them, or young as I am I will pelt you with stones back to the country, for I am the better man of the two. I wish I was as much stronger than all the other suitors in the house as I am than you, I would soon send some of them off sick and sorry, for they mean mischief."

Thus did he speak, and they all of them laughed heartily, which put them in a better humour with Telemachus; so Eumaeus brought the bow on and placed it in the hands of Odysseus. When he had done this, he called Euryclea apart and said to her, "Euryclea, Telemachus says you are to close the doors of the women's apartments. If they hear any groaning or uproar as of men fighting about the house, they are not to come out, but are to keep quiet and stay where they are at their work."

Euryclea did as she was told and closed the doors of the women's apartments.

Meanwhile Philoetius slipped quietly out and made fast the gates of the outer court. There was a ship's cable of byblus fibre lying in the gatehouse, so he made the gates fast with it and then came in again, resuming the seat that he had left, and keeping an eye on Odysseus, who had now got the bow in his hands, and was turning it every way about, and proving it all over to see whether the worms had been eating into its two horns during his absence. Then would one turn towards his neighbour saying, "This is some tricky old bow-fancier; either he has got one like it

at home, or he wants to make one, in such workmanlike style does the old vagabond handle it."

Another said, "I hope he may be no more successful in other things than he is likely to be in stringing this bow."

But Odysseus, when he had taken it up and examined it all over, strung it as easily as a skilled bard strings a new peg of his lyre and makes the twisted gut fast at both ends. Then he took it in his right hand to prove the string, and it sang sweetly under his touch like the twittering of a swallow. The suitors were dismayed, and turned colour as they heard it; at that moment, moreover, Zeus thundered loudly as a sign, and the heart of Odysseus rejoiced as he heard the omen that the son of scheming Cronus had sent him.

He took an arrow that was lying upon the table – for those which the Achaeans were so shortly about to taste were all inside the quiver – he laid it on the centre-piece of the bow, and drew the notch of the arrow and the string toward him, still seated on his seat. When he had taken aim he let fly, and his arrow pierced every one of the handle-holes of the axes from the first onwards till it had gone right through them, and into the outer courtyard. Then he said to Telemachus:

"Your guest has not disgraced you, Telemachus. I did not miss what I aimed at, and I was not long in stringing my bow. I am still strong, and not as the suitors twit me with being. Now, however, it is time for the Achaeans to prepare supper while there is still daylight, and then otherwise to disport themselves with song and dance which are the crowning ornaments of a banquet."

As he spoke he made a sign with his eyebrows, and Telemachus girded on his sword, grasped his spear, and stood armed beside his father's seat.

# Book 22

**THEN ODYSSEUS** tore off his rags, and sprang on to the broad pavement with his bow and his quiver full of arrows. He shed the arrows on to the ground at his feet and said, "The mighty contest is at an end. I will now see whether Apollo will vouchsafe it to me to hit another mark which no man has yet hit."

On this he aimed a deadly arrow at Antinous, who was about to take up a two-handled gold cup to drink his wine and already had it in his hands. He had no thought of death – who amongst all the revellers would think that one man, however brave, would stand alone among so many and kill him? The arrow struck Antinous in the throat, and the point went clean through his neck, so that he fell over and the cup dropped from his hand, while a thick stream of blood gushed from his nostrils. He kicked the table from him and upset the things on it, so that the bread and roasted meats were all soiled as they fell over on to the ground. The suitors were in an uproar when they saw that a man had been hit; they sprang in dismay one and all of them from their seats and looked everywhere towards the walls, but there was neither shield nor spear, and they rebuked Odysseus very angrily. “Stranger,” said they, “you shall pay for shooting people in this way: you shall see no other contest; you are a doomed man; he whom you have slain was the foremost youth in Ithaca, and the vultures shall devour you for having killed him.”

Thus they spoke, for they thought that he had killed Antinous by mistake, and did not perceive that death was hanging over the head of every one of them. But Odysseus glared at them and said:

“Dogs, did you think that I should not come back from Troy? You have wasted my substance, have forced my women servants to lie with you, and have wooed my wife while I was still living. You have feared neither God nor man, and now you shall die.”

They turned pale with fear as he spoke, and every man looked round about to see whither he might fly for safety, but Eurymachus alone spoke.

“If you are Odysseus,” said he, “then what you have said is just. We have done much wrong on your lands and in your house. But Antinous who was the head and front of the offending lies low already. It was all his doing. It was not that he wanted to marry Penelope; he did not so much care about that; what he wanted was something quite different, and Zeus has not vouchsafed it to him; he wanted to kill your son and to be chief man in Ithaca. Now, therefore, that he has met the death which was his due, spare the lives of your people. We will make everything good among ourselves, and pay you in full for all that we have eaten and drunk. Each one of us shall pay you a fine worth twenty oxen, and we will keep on giving you

gold and bronze till your heart is softened. Until we have done this no one can complain of your being enraged against us."

Odysseus again glared at him and said, "Though you should give me all that you have in the world both now and all that you ever shall have, I will not stay my hand till I have paid all of you in full. You must fight, or fly for your lives; and fly, not a man of you shall."

Their hearts sank as they heard him, but Eurymachus again spoke saying:

"My friends, this man will give us no quarter. He will stand where he is and shoot us down till he has killed every man among us. Let us then show fight; draw your swords, and hold up the tables to shield you from his arrows. Let us have at him with a rush, to drive him from the pavement and doorway: we can then get through into the town, and raise such an alarm as shall soon stay his shooting."

As he spoke he drew his keen blade of bronze, sharpened on both sides, and with a loud cry sprang towards Odysseus, but Odysseus instantly shot an arrow into his breast that caught him by the nipple and fixed itself in his liver. He dropped his sword and fell doubled up over his table. The cup and all the meats went over on to the ground as he smote the earth with his forehead in the agonies of death, and he kicked the stool with his feet until his eyes were closed in darkness.

Then Amphinomus drew his sword and made straight at Odysseus to try and get him away from the door; but Telemachus was too quick for him, and struck him from behind; the spear caught him between the shoulders and went right through his chest, so that he fell heavily to the ground and struck the earth with his forehead. Then Telemachus sprang away from him, leaving his spear still in the body, for he feared that if he stayed to draw it out, some one of the Achaeans might come up and hack at him with his sword, or knock him down, so he set off at a run, and immediately was at his father's side. Then he said:

"Father, let me bring you a shield, two spears, and a brass helmet for your temples. I will arm myself as well, and will bring other armour for the swineherd and the stockman, for we had better be armed."

"Run and fetch them," answered Odysseus, "while my arrows hold out, or when I am alone they may get me away from the door."

Telemachus did as his father said, and went off to the store room where the armour was kept. He chose four shields, eight spears, and four brass

helmets with horse-hair plumes. He brought them with all speed to his father, and armed himself first, while the stockman and the swineherd also put on their armour, and took their places near Odysseus. Meanwhile Odysseus, as long as his arrows lasted, had been shooting the suitors one by one, and they fell thick on one another: when his arrows gave out, he set the bow to stand against the end wall of the house by the door post, and hung a shield four hides thick about his shoulders; on his comely head he set his helmet, well wrought with a crest of horse-hair that nodded menacingly above it, and he grasped two redoubtable bronze-shod spears.

Now there was a trap door on the wall, while at one end of the pavement there was an exit leading to a narrow passage, and this exit was closed by a well-made door. Odysseus told Philoetius to stand by this door and guard it, for only one person could attack it at a time. But Agelaus shouted out, "Cannot some one go up to the trap door and tell the people what is going on? Help would come at once, and we should soon make an end of this man and his shooting."

"This may not be, Agelaus," answered Melanthius, "the mouth of the narrow passage is dangerously near the entrance to the outer court. One brave man could prevent any number from getting in. But I know what I will do, I will bring you arms from the store-room, for I am sure it is there that Odysseus and his son have put them."

On this the goatherd Melanthius went by back passages to the store-room of Odysseus' house. There he chose twelve shields, with as many helmets and spears, and brought them back as fast as he could to give them to the suitors. Odysseus' heart began to fail him when he saw the suitors putting on their armour and brandishing their spears. He saw the greatness of the danger, and said to Telemachus, "Some one of the women inside is helping the suitors against us, or it may be Melanthius."

Telemachus answered, "The fault, father, is mine, and mine only; I left the store room door open, and they have kept a sharper look out than I have. Go, Eumaeus, put the door to, and see whether it is one of the women who is doing this, or whether, as I suspect, it is Melanthius the son of Dolius."

Thus did they converse. Meanwhile Melanthius was again going to the store room to fetch more armour, but the swineherd saw him and said to Odysseus who was beside him, "Odysseus, noble son of Laertes, it is that

scoundrel Melanthius, just as we suspected, who is going to the store room. Say, shall I kill him, if I can get the better of him, or shall I bring him here that you may take your own revenge for all the many wrongs that he has done in your house?”

Odysseus answered, “Telemachus and I will hold these suitors in check, no matter what they do; go back both of you and bind Melanthius’ hands and feet behind him. Throw him into the store room and make the door fast behind you; then fasten a noose about his body, and string him close up to the rafters from a high bearing-post, that he may linger on in an agony.”

Thus did he speak, and they did even as he had said; they went to the store room, which they entered before Melanthius saw them, for he was busy searching for arms in the innermost part of the room, so the two took their stand on either side of the door and waited. By and by Melanthius came out with a helmet in one hand, and an old dry-rotted shield in the other, which had been borne by Laertes when he was young, but which had been long since thrown aside, and the straps had become unsewn; on this the two seized him, dragged him back by the hair, and threw him struggling to the ground. They bent his hands and feet well behind his back, and bound them tight with a painful bond as Odysseus had told them; then they fastened a noose about his body and strung him up from a high pillar till he was close up to the rafters, and over him did you then vaunt, O swineherd Eumaeus saying, “Melanthius, you will pass the night on a soft bed as you deserve. You will know very well when morning comes from the streams of Oceanus, and it is time for you to be driving in your goats for the suitors to feast on.”

There, then, they left him in very cruel bondage, and having put on their armour they closed the door behind them and went back to take their places by the side of Odysseus; whereon the four men stood in the cloister, fierce and full of fury; nevertheless, those who were in the body of the court were still both brave and many. Then Zeus’s daughter Athene came up to them, having assumed the voice and form of Mentor. Odysseus was glad when he saw her and said, “Mentor, lend me your help, and forget not your old comrade, nor the many good turns he has done you. Besides, you are my age-mate.”

But all the time he felt sure it was Athene, and the suitors from the other side raised an uproar when they saw her. Agelaus was the first to reproach her. “Mentor,” he cried, “do not let Odysseus beguile you into siding with him and fighting the suitors. This is what we will do: when we have killed these people, father and son, we will kill you too. You shall pay for it with your head, and when we have killed you, we will take all you have, in doors or out, and bring it into hotch-pot with Odysseus’ property; we will not let your sons live in your house, nor your daughters, nor shall your widow continue to live in the city of Ithaca.”

This made Athene still more furious, so she scolded Odysseus very angrily. “Odysseus,” said she, “your strength and prowess are no longer what they were when you fought for nine long years among the Trojans about the noble lady Helen. You killed many a man in those days, and it was through your stratagem that Priam’s city was taken. How comes it that you are so lamentably less valiant now that you are on your own ground, face to face with the suitors in your own house? Come on, my good fellow, stand by my side and see how Mentor, son of Alcimus shall fight your foes and requite your kindnesses conferred upon him.”

But she would not give him full victory as yet, for she wished still further to prove his own prowess and that of his brave son, so she flew up to one of the rafters in the roof of the cloister and sat upon it in the form of a swallow.

Meanwhile Agelaus son of Damastor, Eurynomus, Amphimedon, Demoptolemus, Pisander, and Polybus son of Polyctor bore the brunt of the fight upon the suitors’ side; of all those who were still fighting for their lives they were by far the most valiant, for the others had already fallen under the arrows of Odysseus. Agelaus shouted to them and said, “My friends, he will soon have to leave off, for Mentor has gone away after having done nothing for him but brag. They are standing at the doors unsupported. Do not aim at him all at once, but six of you throw your spears first, and see if you cannot cover yourselves with glory by killing him. When he has fallen we need not be uneasy about the others.”

They threw their spears as he bade them, but Athene made them all of no effect. One hit the door post; another went against the door; the pointed shaft of another struck the wall; and as soon as they had avoided all the spears of the suitors Odysseus said to his own men, “My friends, I should

say we too had better let drive into the middle of them, or they will crown all the harm they have done us by killing us outright."

They therefore aimed straight in front of them and threw their spears. Odysseus killed Demoptolemus, Telemachus Euryades, Eumaeus Elatus, while the stockman killed Pisander. These all bit the dust, and as the others drew back into a corner Odysseus and his men rushed forward and regained their spears by drawing them from the bodies of the dead.

The suitors now aimed a second time, but again Athene made their weapons for the most part without effect. One hit a bearing-post of the cloister; another went against the door; while the pointed shaft of another struck the wall. Still, Amphimedon just took a piece of the top skin from off Telemachus' wrist, and Ctesippus managed to graze Eumaeus' shoulder above his shield; but the spear went on and fell to the ground. Then Odysseus and his men let drive into the crowd of suitors. Odysseus hit Eurydamas, Telemachus Amphimedon, and Eumaeus Polybus. After this the stockman hit Ctesippus in the breast, and taunted him saying, "Foul-mouthed son of Polytherses, do not be so foolish as to talk wickedly another time, but let heaven direct your speech, for the gods are far stronger than men. I make you a present of this advice to repay you for the foot which you gave Odysseus when he was begging about in his own house."

Thus spoke the stockman, and Odysseus struck the son of Damastor with a spear in close fight, while Telemachus hit Leocritus son of Evenor in the belly, and the dart went clean through him, so that he fell forward full on his face upon the ground. Then Athene from her seat on the rafter held up her deadly aegis, and the hearts of the suitors quailed. They fled to the other end of the court like a herd of cattle maddened by the gadfly in early summer when the days are at their longest. As eagle-beaked, crook-taloned vultures from the mountains swoop down on the smaller birds that cower in flocks upon the ground, and kill them, for they cannot either fight or fly, and lookers on enjoy the sport – even so did Odysseus and his men fall upon the suitors and smite them on every side. They made a horrible groaning as their brains were being battered in, and the ground seethed with their blood.

Leiodes then caught the knees of Odysseus and said, "Odysseus I beseech you have mercy upon me and spare me. I never wronged any of the women

in your house either in word or deed, and I tried to stop the others. I saw them, but they would not listen, and now they are paying for their folly. I was their sacrificing priest; if you kill me, I shall die without having done anything to deserve it, and shall have got no thanks for all the good that I did."

Odysseus looked sternly at him and answered, "If you were their sacrificing priest, you must have prayed many a time that it might be long before I got home again, and that you might marry my wife and have children by her. Therefore you shall die."

With these words he picked up the sword that Agelaus had dropped when he was being killed, and which was lying upon the ground. Then he struck Leiodes on the back of his neck, so that his head fell rolling in the dust while he was yet speaking.

The minstrel Phemius son of Terpes – he who had been forced by the suitors to sing to them – now tried to save his life. He was standing near towards the trap door, and held his lyre in his hand. He did not know whether to fly out of the cloister and sit down by the altar of Zeus that was in the outer court, and on which both Laertes and Odysseus had offered up the thigh bones of many an ox, or whether to go straight up to Odysseus and embrace his knees, but in the end he deemed it best to embrace Odysseus' knees. So he laid his lyre on the ground between the mixing bowl and the silver-studded seat; then going up to Odysseus he caught hold of his knees and said, "Odysseus, I beseech you have mercy on me and spare me. You will be sorry for it afterwards if you kill a bard who can sing both for gods and men as I can. I make all my lays myself, and heaven visits me with every kind of inspiration. I would sing to you as though you were a god, do not therefore be in such a hurry to cut my head off. Your own son Telemachus will tell you that I did not want to frequent your house and sing to the suitors after their meals, but they were too many and too strong for me, so they made me."

Telemachus heard him, and at once went up to his father. "Hold!" he cried, "the man is guiltless, do him no hurt; and we will spare Medon too, who was always good to me when I was a boy, unless Philoetius or Eumaeus has already killed him, or he has fallen in your way when you were raging about the court."

Medon caught these words of Telemachus, for he was crouching under a seat beneath which he had hidden by covering himself up with a freshly flayed heifer's hide, so he threw off the hide, went up to Telemachus, and laid hold of his knees.

"Here I am, my dear sir," said he, "stay your hand therefore, and tell your father, or he will kill me in his rage against the suitors for having wasted his substance and been so foolishly disrespectful to yourself."

Odysseus smiled at him and answered, "Fear not; Telemachus has saved your life, that you may know in future, and tell other people, how greatly better good deeds prosper than evil ones. Go, therefore, outside the cloisters into the outer court, and be out of the way of the slaughter – you and the bard – while I finish my work here inside."

The pair went into the outer court as fast as they could, and sat down by Zeus's great altar, looking fearfully round, and still expecting that they would be killed. Then Odysseus searched the whole court carefully over, to see if anyone had managed to hide himself and was still living, but he found them all lying in the dust and weltering in their blood. They were like fishes which fishermen have netted out of the sea, and thrown upon the beach to lie gasping for water till the heat of the sun makes an end of them. Even so were the suitors lying all huddled up one against the other.

Then Odysseus said to Telemachus, "Call nurse Euryclea; I have something to say to her."

Telemachus went and knocked at the door of the women's room. "Make haste," said he, "you old woman who have been set over all the other women in the house. Come outside; my father wishes to speak to you."

When Euryclea heard this she unfastened the door of the women's room and came out, following Telemachus. She found Odysseus among the corpses bespattered with blood and filth like a lion that has just been devouring an ox, and his breast and both his cheeks are all bloody, so that he is a fearful sight; even so was Odysseus besmirched from head to foot with gore. When she saw all the corpses and such a quantity of blood, she was beginning to cry out for joy, for she saw that a great deed had been done; but Odysseus checked her, "Old woman," said he, "rejoice in silence; restrain yourself, and do not make any noise about it; it is an unholy thing to vaunt over dead men. Heaven's doom and their own evil deeds have brought these men to destruction, for they respected no man in

the whole world, neither rich nor poor, who came near them, and they have come to a bad end as a punishment for their wickedness and folly. Now, however, tell me which of the women in the house have misconducted themselves, and who are innocent."

"I will tell you the truth, my son," answered Euryclea. "There are fifty women in the house whom we teach to do things, such as carding wool, and all kinds of household work. Of these, twelve in all have misbehaved, and have been wanting in respect to me, and also to Penelope. They showed no disrespect to Telemachus, for he has only lately grown and his mother never permitted him to give orders to the female servants; but let me go upstairs and tell your wife all that has happened, for some god has been sending her to sleep."

"Do not wake her yet," answered Odysseus, "but tell the women who have misconducted themselves to come to me."

Euryclea left the cloister to tell the women, and make them come to Odysseus; in the meantime he called Telemachus, the stockman, and the swineherd. "Begin," said he, "to remove the dead, and make the women help you. Then, get sponges and clean water to swill down the tables and seats. When you have thoroughly cleansed the whole cloisters, take the women into the space between the domed room and the wall of the outer court, and run them through with your swords till they are quite dead, and have forgotten all about love and the way in which they used to lie in secret with the suitors."

On this the women came down in a body, weeping and wailing bitterly. First they carried the dead bodies out, and propped them up against one another in the gatehouse. Odysseus ordered them about and made them do their work quickly, so they had to carry the bodies out. When they had done this, they cleaned all the tables and seats with sponges and water, while Telemachus and the two others shovelled up the blood and dirt from the ground, and the women carried it all away and put it out of doors. Then when they had made the whole place quite clean and orderly, they took the women out and hemmed them in the narrow space between the wall of the domed room and that of the yard, so that they could not get away: and Telemachus said to the other two, "I shall not let these women die a clean death, for they were insolent to me and my mother, and used to sleep with the suitors."

So saying he made a ship's cable fast to one of the bearing-posts that supported the roof of the domed room, and secured it all around the building, at a good height, lest any of the women's feet should touch the ground; and as thrushes or doves beat against a net that has been set for them in a thicket just as they were getting to their nest, and a terrible fate awaits them, even so did the women have to put their heads in nooses one after the other and die most miserably. Their feet moved convulsively for a while, but not for very long.

As for Melanthius, they took him through the cloister into the inner court. There they cut off his nose and his ears; they drew out his vitals and gave them to the dogs raw, and then in their fury they cut off his hands and his feet.

When they had done this they washed their hands and feet and went back into the house, for all was now over; and Odysseus said to the dear old nurse Euryclea, "Bring me sulphur, which cleanses all pollution, and fetch fire also that I may burn it, and purify the cloisters. Go, moreover, and tell Penelope to come here with her attendants, and also all the maidservants that are in the house."

"All that you have said is true," answered Euryclea, "but let me bring you some clean clothes – a shirt and cloak. Do not keep these rags on your back any longer. It is not right."

"First light me a fire," replied Odysseus.

She brought the fire and sulphur, as he had bidden her, and Odysseus thoroughly purified the cloisters and both the inner and outer courts. Then she went inside to call the women and tell them what had happened; whereon they came from their apartment with torches in their hands, and pressed round Odysseus to embrace him, kissing his head and shoulders and taking hold of his hands. It made him feel as if he should like to weep, for he remembered every one of them.

# Book 23

**EURYCLEA NOW** went upstairs laughing to tell her mistress that her dear husband had come home. Her aged knees became young again and her feet were nimble for joy as she went up to her mistress and bent over her head to speak to her. "Wake up Penelope, my dear child," she exclaimed,

“and see with your own eyes something that you have been wanting this long time past. Odysseus has at last indeed come home again, and has killed the suitors who were giving so much trouble in his house, eating up his estate and ill treating his son.”

“My good nurse,” answered Penelope, “you must be mad. The gods sometimes send some very sensible people out of their minds, and make foolish people become sensible. This is what they must have been doing to you; for you always used to be a reasonable person. Why should you thus mock me when I have trouble enough already – talking such nonsense, and waking me up out of a sweet sleep that had taken possession of my eyes and closed them? I have never slept so soundly from the day my poor husband went to that city with the ill-omened name. Go back again into the women’s room; if it had been any one else who had woke me up to bring me such absurd news I should have sent her away with a severe scolding. As it is your age shall protect you.”

“My dear child,” answered Euryclea, “I am not mocking you. It is quite true as I tell you that Odysseus is come home again. He was the stranger whom they all kept on treating so badly in the cloister. Telemachus knew all the time that he was come back, but kept his father’s secret that he might have his revenge on all these wicked people.”

Then Penelope sprang up from her couch, threw her arms round Euryclea, and wept for joy. “But my dear nurse,” said she, “explain this to me; if he has really come home as you say, how did he manage to overcome the wicked suitors single handed, seeing what a number of them there always were?”

“I was not there,” answered Euryclea, “and do not know; I only heard them groaning while they were being killed. We sat crouching and huddled up in a corner of the women’s room with the doors closed, till your son came to fetch me because his father sent him. Then I found Odysseus standing over the corpses that were lying on the ground all round him, one on top of the other. You would have enjoyed it if you could have seen him standing there all bespattered with blood and filth, and looking just like a lion. But the corpses are now all piled up in the gatehouse that is in the outer court, and Odysseus has lit a great fire to purify the house with sulphur. He has sent me to call you, so come with me that you may both be happy together after all; for now at last the desire of your heart has been

fulfilled; your husband is come home to find both wife and son alive and well, and to take his revenge in his own house on the suitors who behaved so badly to him."

"My dear nurse," said Penelope, "do not exult too confidently over all this. You know how delighted every one would be to see Odysseus come home – more particularly myself, and the son who has been born to both of us; but what you tell me cannot be really true. It is some god who is angry with the suitors for their great wickedness, and has made an end of them; for they respected no man in the whole world, neither rich nor poor, who came near them, and they have come to a bad end in consequence of their iniquity; Odysseus is dead far away from the Achaean land; he will never return home again."

Then nurse Euryclea said, "My child, what are you talking about? But you were all hard of belief and have made up your mind that your husband is never coming, although he is in the house and by his own fire side at this very moment. Besides I can give you another proof; when I was washing him I perceived the scar which the wild boar gave him, and I wanted to tell you about it, but in his wisdom he would not let me, and clapped his hands over my mouth; so come with me and I will make this bargain with you – if I am deceiving you, you may have me killed by the most cruel death you can think of."

"My dear nurse," said Penelope, "however wise you may be you can hardly fathom the counsels of the gods. Nevertheless, we will go in search of my son, that I may see the corpses of the suitors, and the man who has killed them."

On this she came down from her upper room, and while doing so she considered whether she should keep at a distance from her husband and question him, or whether she should at once go up to him and embrace him. When, however, she had crossed the stone floor of the cloister, she sat down opposite Odysseus by the fire, against the wall at right angles to that by which she had entered, while Odysseus sat near one of the bearing-posts, looking upon the ground, and waiting to see what his brave wife would say to him when she saw him. For a long time she sat silent and as one lost in amazement. At one moment she looked him full in the face, but then again directly, she was misled by his shabby clothes and failed to recognise him, till Telemachus began to reproach her and said:

“Mother – but you are so hard that I cannot call you by such a name – why do you keep away from my father in this way? Why do you not sit by his side and begin talking to him and asking him questions? No other woman could bear to keep away from her husband when he had come back to her after twenty years of absence, and after having gone through so much; but your heart always was as hard as a stone.”

Penelope answered, “My son, I am so lost in astonishment that I can find no words in which either to ask questions or to answer them. I cannot even look him straight in the face. Still, if he really is Odysseus come back to his own home again, we shall get to understand one another better by and by, for there are tokens with which we two are alone acquainted, and which are hidden from all others.”

Odysseus smiled at this, and said to Telemachus, “Let your mother put me to any proof she likes; she will make up her mind about it presently. She rejects me for the moment and believes me to be somebody else, because I am covered with dirt and have such bad clothes on; let us, however, consider what we had better do next. When one man has killed another – even though he was not one who would leave many friends to take up his quarrel – the man who has killed him must still say good bye to his friends and fly the country; whereas we have been killing the stay of a whole town, and all the picked youth of Ithaca. I would have you consider this matter.”

“Look to it yourself, father,” answered Telemachus, “for they say you are the wisest counsellor in the world, and that there is no other mortal man who can compare with you. We will follow you with right good will, nor shall you find us fail you in so far as our strength holds out.”

“I will say what I think will be best,” answered Odysseus. “First wash and put your shirts on; tell the maids also to go to their own room and dress; Phemius shall then strike up a dance tune on his lyre, so that if people outside hear, or any of the neighbours, or some one going along the street happens to notice it, they may think there is a wedding in the house, and no rumours about the death of the suitors will get about in the town, before we can escape to the woods upon my own land. Once there, we will settle which of the courses heaven vouchsafes us shall seem wisest.”

Thus did he speak, and they did even as he had said. First they washed and put their shirts on, while the women got ready. Then Phemius took his

lyre and set them all longing for sweet song and stately dance. The house re-echoed with the sound of men and women dancing, and the people outside said, “I suppose the queen has been getting married at last. She ought to be ashamed of herself for not continuing to protect her husband’s property until he comes home.”

This was what they said, but they did not know what it was that had been happening. The upper servant Eurynome washed and anointed Odysseus in his own house and gave him a shirt and cloak, while Athene made him look taller and stronger than before; she also made the hair grow thick on the top of his head, and flow down in curls like hyacinth blossoms; she glorified him about the head and shoulders just as a skilful workman who has studied art of all kinds under Hephaestus or Athene – and his work is full of beauty – enriches a piece of silver plate by gilding it. He came from the bath looking like one of the immortals, and sat down opposite his wife on the seat he had left. “My dear,” said he, “heaven has endowed you with a heart more unyielding than woman ever yet had. No other woman could bear to keep away from her husband when he had come back to her after twenty years of absence, and after having gone through so much. But come, nurse, get a bed ready for me; I will sleep alone, for this woman has a heart as hard as iron.”

“My dear,” answered Penelope, “I have no wish to set myself up, nor to depreciate you; but I am not struck by your appearance, for I very well remember what kind of a man you were when you set sail from Ithaca. Nevertheless, Euryclea, take his bed outside the bed chamber that he himself built. Bring the bed outside this room, and put bedding upon it with fleeces, good coverlets, and blankets.”

She said this to try him, but Odysseus was very angry and said, “Wife, I am much displeased at what you have just been saying. Who has been taking my bed from the place in which I left it? He must have found it a hard task, no matter how skilled a workman he was, unless some god came and helped him to shift it. There is no man living, however strong and in his prime, who could move it from its place, for it is a marvellous curiosity which I made with my very own hands. There was a young olive growing within the precincts of the house, in full vigour, and about as thick as a bearing-post. I built my room round this with strong walls of stone and a roof to cover them, and I made the doors strong and well-

fitting. Then I cut off the top boughs of the olive tree and left the stump standing. This I dressed roughly from the root upwards and then worked with carpenter's tools well and skilfully, straightening my work by drawing a line on the wood, and making it into a bed-prop. I then bored a hole down the middle, and made it the centre-post of my bed, at which I worked till I had finished it, inlaying it with gold and silver; after this I stretched a hide of crimson leather from one side of it to the other. So you see I know all about it, and I desire to learn whether it is still there, or whether any one has been removing it by cutting down the olive tree at its roots."

When she heard the sure proofs Odysseus now gave her, she fairly broke down. She flew weeping to his side, flung her arms about his neck, and kissed him. "Do not be angry with me Odysseus," she cried, "you, who are the wisest of mankind. We have suffered, both of us. Heaven has denied us the happiness of spending our youth, and of growing old, together; do not then be aggrieved or take it amiss that I did not embrace you thus as soon as I saw you. I have been shuddering all the time through fear that someone might come here and deceive me with a lying story; for there are many very wicked people going about. Zeus's daughter Helen would never have yielded herself to a man from a foreign country, if she had known that the sons of Achaeans would come after her and bring her back. Heaven put it in her heart to do wrong, and she gave no thought to that sin, which has been the source of all our sorrows. Now, however, that you have convinced me by showing that you know all about our bed (which no human being has ever seen but you and I and a single maidservant, the daughter of Actor, who was given me by my father on my marriage, and who keeps the doors of our room) hard of belief though I have been I can mistrust no longer."

Then Odysseus in his turn melted, and wept as he clasped his dear and faithful wife to his bosom. As the sight of land is welcome to men who are swimming towards the shore, when Poseidon has wrecked their ship with the fury of his winds and waves; a few alone reach the land, and these, covered with brine, are thankful when they find themselves on firm ground and out of danger – even so was her husband welcome to her as she looked upon him, and she could not tear her two fair arms from about his neck. Indeed they would have gone on indulging their sorrow till rosy-fingered

morn appeared, had not Athene determined otherwise, and held night back in the far west, while she would not suffer Dawn to leave Oceanus, nor to yoke the two steeds Lampus and Phaethon that bear her onward to break the day upon mankind.

At last, however, Odysseus said, “Wife, we have not yet reached the end of our troubles. I have an unknown amount of toil still to undergo. It is long and difficult, but I must go through with it, for thus the shade of Teiresias prophesied concerning me, on the day when I went down into Hades to ask about my return and that of my companions. But now let us go to bed, that we may lie down and enjoy the blessed boon of sleep.”

“You shall go to bed as soon as you please,” replied Penelope, “now that the gods have sent you home to your own good house and to your country. But as heaven has put it in your mind to speak of it, tell me about the task that lies before you. I shall have to hear about it later, so it is better that I should be told at once.”

“My dear,” answered Odysseus, “why should you press me to tell you? Still, I will not conceal it from you, though you will not like it. I do not like it myself, for Teiresias bade me travel far and wide, carrying an oar, till I came to a country where the people have never heard of the sea, and do not even mix salt with their food. They know nothing about ships, nor oars that are as the wings of a ship. He gave me this certain token which I will not hide from you. He said that a wayfarer should meet me and ask me whether it was a winnowing shovel that I had on my shoulder. On this, I was to fix my oar in the ground and sacrifice a ram, a bull, and a boar to Poseidon; after which I was to go home and offer hecatombs to all the gods in heaven, one after the other. As for myself, he said that death should come to me from the sea, and that my life should ebb away very gently when I was full of years and peace of mind, and my people should bless me. All this, he said, should surely come to pass.”

And Penelope said, “If the gods are going to vouchsafe you a happier time in your old age, you may hope then to have some respite from misfortune.”

Thus did they converse. Meanwhile Eurynome and the nurse took torches and made the bed ready with soft coverlets; as soon as they had laid them, the nurse went back into the house to go to her rest, leaving the bed chamber woman Eurynome to show Odysseus and Penelope to bed by

torch light. When she had conducted them to their room she went back, and they then came joyfully to the rites of their own old bed. Telemachus, Philoetius, and the swineherd now left off dancing, and made the women leave off also. They then laid themselves down to sleep in the cloisters.

When Odysseus and Penelope had had their fill of love they fell talking with one another. She told him how much she had had to bear in seeing the house filled with a crowd of wicked suitors who had killed so many sheep and oxen on her account, and had drunk so many casks of wine. Odysseus in his turn told her what he had suffered, and how much trouble he had himself given to other people. He told her everything, and she was so delighted to listen that she never went to sleep till he had ended his whole story.

He began with his victory over the Cicons, and how he thence reached the fertile land of the Lotus-eaters. He told her all about the Cyclops and how he had punished him for having so ruthlessly eaten his brave comrades; how he then went on to Aeolus, who received him hospitably and furthered him on his way, but even so he was not to reach home, for to his great grief a hurricane carried him out to sea again; how he went on to the Laestrygonian city Telepylos, where the people destroyed all his ships with their crews, save himself and his own ship only. Then he told of cunning Circe and her craft, and how he sailed to the chill house of Hades, to consult the ghost of the Theban prophet Teiresias, and how he saw his old comrades in arms, and his mother who bore him and brought him up when he was a child; how he then heard the wondrous singing of the Sirens, and went on to the wandering rocks and terrible Charybdis and to Scylla, whom no man had ever yet passed in safety; how his men then ate the cattle of the sun-god, and how Zeus therefore struck the ship with his thunderbolts, so that all his men perished together, himself alone being left alive; how at last he reached the Ogygian island and the nymph Calypso, who kept him there in a cave, and fed him, and wanted him to marry her, in which case she intended making him immortal so that he should never grow old, but she could not persuade him to let her do so; and how after much suffering he had found his way to the Phaeacians, who had treated him as though he had been a god, and sent him back in a ship to his own country after having given him gold, bronze, and raiment in great

abundance. This was the last thing about which he told her, for here a deep sleep took hold upon him and eased the burden of his sorrows.

Then Athene bethought her of another matter. When she deemed that Odysseus had had both of his wife and of repose, she bade gold-enthroned Dawn rise out of Oceanus that she might shed light upon mankind. On this, Odysseus rose from his comfortable bed and said to Penelope, “Wife, we have both of us had our full share of troubles, you, here, in lamenting my absence, and I in being prevented from getting home though I was longing all the time to do so. Now, however, that we have at last come together, take care of the property that is in the house. As for the sheep and goats which the wicked suitors have eaten, I will take many myself by force from other people, and will compel the Achaeans to make good the rest till they shall have filled all my yards. I am now going to the wooded lands out in the country to see my father who has so long been grieved on my account, and to yourself I will give these instructions, though you have little need of them. At sunrise it will at once get abroad that I have been killing the suitors; go upstairs, therefore, and stay there with your women. See nobody and ask no questions.”

As he spoke he girded on his armour. Then he roused Telemachus, Philoetius, and Eumaeus, and told them all to put on their armour also. This they did, and armed themselves. When they had done so, they opened the gates and sallied forth, Odysseus leading the way. It was now daylight, but Athene nevertheless concealed them in darkness and led them quickly out of the town.

# Book 24

**THEN HERMES** of Cyllene summoned the ghosts of the suitors, and in his hand he held the fair golden wand with which he seals men’s eyes in sleep or wakes them just as he pleases; with this he roused the ghosts and led them, while they followed whining and gibbering behind him. As bats fly squealing in the hollow of some great cave, when one of them has fallen out of the cluster in which they hang, even so did the ghosts whine and squeal as Hermes the healer of sorrow led them down into the dark abode of death. When they had passed the waters of Oceanus and the rock Leucas, they came to the gates of the sun and the land of dreams, whereon

they reached the meadow of asphodel where dwell the souls and shadows of them that can labour no more.

Here they found the ghost of Achilles son of Peleus, with those of Patroclus, Antilochus, and Ajax, who was the finest and handsomest man of all the Danaans after the son of Peleus himself.

They gathered round the ghost of the son of Peleus, and the ghost of Agamemnon joined them, sorrowing bitterly. Round him were gathered also the ghosts of those who had perished with him in the house of Aegisthus; and the ghost of Achilles spoke first.

"Son of Atreus," it said, "we used to say that Zeus had loved you better from first to last than any other hero, for you were captain over many and brave men, when we were all fighting together before Troy; yet the hand of death, which no mortal can escape, was laid upon you all too early. Better for you had you fallen at Troy in the hey-day of your renown, for the Achaeans would have built a mound over your ashes, and your son would have been heir to your good name, whereas it has now been your lot to come to a most miserable end."

"Happy son of Peleus," answered the ghost of Agamemnon, "for having died at Troy far from Argos, while the bravest of the Trojans and the Achaeans fell round you fighting for your body. There you lay in the whirling clouds of dust, all huge and hugely, heedless now of your chivalry. We fought the whole of the livelong day, nor should we ever have left off if Zeus had not sent a hurricane to stay us. Then, when we had borne you to the ships out of the fray, we laid you on your bed and cleansed your fair skin with warm water and with ointments. The Danaans tore their hair and wept bitterly round about you. Your mother, when she heard, came with her immortal nymphs from out of the sea, and the sound of a great wailing went forth over the waters so that the Achaeans quaked for fear. They would have fled panic-stricken to their ships had not wise old Nestor whose counsel was ever truest checked them saying, 'Hold, Argives, fly not sons of the Achaeans, this is his mother coming from the sea with her immortal nymphs to view the body of her son.'

"Thus he spoke, and the Achaeans feared no more. The daughters of the old man of the sea stood round you weeping bitterly, and clothed you in immortal raiment. The nine muses also came and lifted up their sweet voices in lament – calling and answering one another; there was not an

Argive but wept for pity of the dirge they chaunted. Days and nights seven and ten we mourned you, mortals and immortals, but on the eighteenth day we gave you to the flames, and many a fat sheep with many an ox did we slay in sacrifice around you. You were burnt in raiment of the gods, with rich resins and with honey, while heroes, horse and foot, clashed their armour round the pile as you were burning, with the tramp as of a great multitude. But when the flames of heaven had done their work, we gathered your white bones at daybreak and laid them in ointments and in pure wine. Your mother brought us a golden vase to hold them – gift of Dionysus, and work of Hephaestus himself; in this we mingled your bleached bones with those of Patroclus who had gone before you, and separate we enclosed also those of Antilochus, who had been closer to you than any other of your comrades now that Patroclus was no more.

"Over these the host of the Argives built a noble tomb, on a point jutting out over the open Hellespont, that it might be seen from far out upon the sea by those now living and by them that shall be born hereafter. Your mother begged prizes from the gods, and offered them to be contended for by the noblest of the Achaeans. You must have been present at the funeral of many a hero, when the young men gird themselves and make ready to contend for prizes on the death of some great chieftain, but you never saw such prizes as silver-footed Thetis offered in your honour; for the gods loved you well. Thus even in death your fame, Achilles, has not been lost, and your name lives evermore among all mankind. But as for me, what solace had I when the days of my fighting were done? For Zeus willed my destruction on my return, by the hands of Aegisthus and those of my wicked wife."

Thus did they converse, and presently Hermes came up to them with the ghosts of the suitors who had been killed by Odysseus. The ghosts of Agamemnon and Achilles were astonished at seeing them, and went up to them at once. The ghost of Agamemnon recognised Amphimedon son of Melaneus, who lived in Ithaca and had been his host, so it began to talk to him.

"Amphimedon," it said, "what has happened to all you fine young men – all of an age too – that you are come down here under the ground? One could pick no finer body of men from any city. Did Poseidon raise his winds and waves against you when you were at sea, or did your enemies

make an end of you on the mainland when you were cattle-lifting or sheep-stealing, or while fighting in defence of their wives and city? Answer my question, for I have been your guest. Do you not remember how I came to your house with Menelaus, to persuade Odysseus to join us with his ships against Troy? It was a whole month ere we could resume our voyage, for we had hard work to persuade Odysseus to come with us."

And the ghost of Amphimedon answered, "Agamemnon, son of Atreus, king of men, I remember everything that you have said, and will tell you fully and accurately about the way in which our end was brought about. Odysseus had been long gone, and we were courting his wife, who did not say point blank that she would not marry, nor yet bring matters to an end, for she meant to compass our destruction: this, then, was the trick she played us. She set up a great tambour frame in her room and began to work on an enormous piece of fine needlework. 'Sweethearts,' said she, 'Odysseus is indeed dead, still, do not press me to marry again immediately; wait – for I would not have my skill in needlework perish unrecorded – till I have completed a pall for the hero Laertes, against the time when death shall take him. He is very rich, and the women of the place will talk if he is laid out without a pall.' This is what she said, and we assented; whereupon we could see her working upon her great web all day long, but at night she would unpick the stitches again by torchlight. She fooled us in this way for three years without our finding it out, but as time wore on and she was now in her fourth year, in the waning of moons and many days had been accomplished, one of her maids who knew what she was doing told us, and we caught her in the act of undoing her work, so she had to finish it whether she would or no; and when she showed us the robe she had made, after she had had it washed, its splendour was as that of the sun or moon.

"Then some malicious god conveyed Odysseus to the upland farm where his swineherd lives. Thither presently came also his son, returning from a voyage to Pylos, and the two came to the town when they had hatched their plot for our destruction. Telemachus came first, and then after him, accompanied by the swineherd, came Odysseus, clad in rags and leaning on a staff as though he were some miserable old beggar. He came so unexpectedly that none of us knew him, not even the older ones among us, and we reviled him and threw things at him. He endured both being struck

and insulted without a word, though he was in his own house; but when the will of Aegis-bearing Zeus inspired him, he and Telemachus took the armour and hid it in an inner chamber, bolting the doors behind them. Then he cunningly made his wife offer his bow and a quantity of iron to be contended for by us ill-fated suitors; and this was the beginning of our end, for not one of us could string the bow – nor nearly do so. When it was about to reach the hands of Odysseus, we all of us shouted out that it should not be given him, no matter what he might say, but Telemachus insisted on his having it. When he had got it in his hands he strung it with ease and sent his arrow through the iron. Then he stood on the floor of the cloister and poured his arrows on the ground, glaring fiercely about him. First he killed Antinous, and then, aiming straight before him, he let fly his deadly darts and they fell thick on one another. It was plain that some one of the gods was helping them, for they fell upon us with might and main throughout the cloisters, and there was a hideous sound of groaning as our brains were being battered in, and the ground seethed with our blood. This, Agamemnon, is how we came by our end, and our bodies are lying still uncared for in the house of Odysseus, for our friends at home do not yet know what has happened, so that they cannot lay us out and wash the black blood from our wounds, making moan over us according to the offices due to the departed."

"Happy Odysseus, son of Laertes," replied the ghost of Agamemnon, "you are indeed blessed in the possession of a wife endowed with such rare excellence of understanding, and so faithful to her wedded lord as Penelope the daughter of Icarius. The fame, therefore, of her virtue shall never die, and the immortals shall compose a song that shall be welcome to all mankind in honour of the constancy of Penelope. How far otherwise was the wickedness of the daughter of Tyndareus who killed her lawful husband; her song shall be hateful among men, for she has brought disgrace on all womankind even on the good ones."

Thus did they converse in the house of Hades deep down within the bowels of the earth. Meanwhile Odysseus and the others passed out of the town and soon reached the fair and well-tilled farm of Laertes, which he had reclaimed with infinite labour. Here was his house, with a lean-to running all round it, where the slaves who worked for him slept and sat and ate, while inside the house there was an old Sicel woman, who looked

after him in this his country-farm. When Odysseus got there, he said to his son and to the other two:

"Go to the house, and kill the best pig that you can find for dinner. Meanwhile I want to see whether my father will know me, or fail to recognise me after so long an absence."

He then took off his armour and gave it to Eumaeus and Philoetius, who went straight on to the house, while he turned off into the vineyard to make trial of his father. As he went down into the great orchard, he did not see Dolius, nor any of his sons nor of the other bondsmen, for they were all gathering thorns to make a fence for the vineyard, at the place where the old man had told them; he therefore found his father alone, hoeing a vine. He had on a dirty old shirt, patched and very shabby; his legs were bound round with thongs of oxhide to save him from the brambles, and he also wore sleeves of leather; he had a goat skin cap on his head, and was looking very woe-begone. When Odysseus saw him so worn, so old and full of sorrow, he stood still under a tall pear tree and began to weep. He doubted whether to embrace him, kiss him, and tell him all about his having come home, or whether he should first question him and see what he would say. In the end he deemed it best to be crafty with him, so in this mind he went up to his father, who was bending down and digging about a plant.

"I see, sir," said Odysseus, "that you are an excellent gardener – what pains you take with it, to be sure. There is not a single plant, not a fig tree, vine, olive, pear, nor flower bed, but bears the trace of your attention. I trust, however, that you will not be offended if I say that you take better care of your garden than of yourself. You are old, unsavoury, and very meanly clad. It cannot be because you are idle that your master takes such poor care of you, indeed your face and figure have nothing of the slave about them, and proclaim you of noble birth. I should have said that you were one of those who should wash well, eat well, and lie soft at night as old men have a right to do; but tell me, and tell me true, whose bondman are you, and in whose garden are you working? Tell me also about another matter. Is this place that I have come to really Ithaca? I met a man just now who said so, but he was a dull fellow, and had not the patience to hear my story out when I was asking him about an old friend of mine, whether he was still living, or was already dead and in the house of Hades. Believe

me when I tell you that this man came to my house once when I was in my own country and never yet did any stranger come to me whom I liked better. He said that his family came from Ithaca and that his father was Laertes, son of Arceisius. I received him hospitably, making him welcome to all the abundance of my house, and when he went away I gave him all customary presents. I gave him seven talents of fine gold, and a cup of solid silver with flowers chased upon it. I gave him twelve light cloaks, and as many pieces of tapestry; I also gave him twelve cloaks of single fold, twelve rugs, twelve fair mantles, and an equal number of shirts. To all this I added four good looking women skilled in all useful arts, and I let him take his choice."

His father shed tears and answered, "Sir, you have indeed come to the country that you have named, but it is fallen into the hands of wicked people. All this wealth of presents has been given to no purpose. If you could have found your friend here alive in Ithaca, he would have entertained you hospitably and would have requited your presents amply when you left him – as would have been only right considering what you had already given him. But tell me, and tell me true, how many years is it since you entertained this guest – my unhappy son, as ever was? Alas! He has perished far from his own country; the fishes of the sea have eaten him, or he has fallen a prey to the birds and wild beasts of some continent. Neither his mother, nor I his father, who were his parents, could throw our arms about him and wrap him in his shroud, nor could his excellent and richly dowered wife Penelope bewail her husband as was natural upon his death bed, and close his eyes according to the offices due to the departed. But now, tell me truly for I want to know. Who and whence are you – tell me of your town and parents? Where is the ship lying that has brought you and your men to Ithaca? Or were you a passenger on some other man's ship, and those who brought you here have gone on their way and left you?"

"I will tell you everything," answered Odysseus, "quite truly. I come from Alybas, where I have a fine house. I am son of king Apheidas, who is the son of Polypemon. My own name is Eperitus; heaven drove me off my course as I was leaving Sicania, and I have been carried here against my will. As for my ship it is lying over yonder, off the open country outside the town, and this is the fifth year since Odysseus left my country. Poor

fellow, yet the omens were good for him when he left me. The birds all flew on our right hands, and both he and I rejoiced to see them as we parted, for we had every hope that we should have another friendly meeting and exchange presents."

A dark cloud of sorrow fell upon Laertes as he listened. He filled both hands with the dust from off the ground and poured it over his grey head, groaning heavily as he did so. The heart of Odysseus was touched, and his nostrils quivered as he looked upon his father; then he sprang towards him, flung his arms about him and kissed him, saying, "I am he, father, about whom you are asking – I have returned after having been away for twenty years. But cease your sighing and lamentation – we have no time to lose, for I should tell you that I have been killing the suitors in my house, to punish them for their insolence and crimes."

"If you really are my son Odysseus," replied Laertes, "and have come back again, you must give me such manifest proof of your identity as shall convince me."

"First observe this scar," answered Odysseus, "which I got from a boar's tusk when I was hunting on Mt. Parnassus. You and my mother had sent me to Autolycus, my mother's father, to receive the presents which when he was over here he had promised to give me. Furthermore I will point out to you the trees in the vineyard which you gave me, and I asked you all about them as I followed you round the garden. We went over them all, and you told me their names and what they all were. You gave me thirteen pear trees, ten apple trees, and forty fig trees; you also said you would give me fifty rows of vines; there was corn planted between each row, and they yield grapes of every kind when the heat of heaven has been laid heavy upon them."

Laertes' strength failed him when he heard the convincing proofs which his son had given him. He threw his arms about him, and Odysseus had to support him, or he would have gone off into a swoon; but as soon as he came to, and was beginning to recover his senses, he said, "O father Zeus, then you gods are still in Olympus after all, if the suitors have really been punished for their insolence and folly. Nevertheless, I am much afraid that I shall have all the townspeople of Ithaca up here directly, and they will be sending messengers everywhere throughout the cities of the Cephallenians."

Odysseus answered, “Take heart and do not trouble yourself about that, but let us go into the house hard by your garden. I have already told Telemachus, Philoetius, and Eumaeus to go on there and get dinner ready as soon as possible.”

Thus conversing the two made their way towards the house. When they got there they found Telemachus with the stockman and the swineherd cutting up meat and mixing wine with water. Then the old Sicel woman took Laertes inside and washed him and anointed him with oil. She put him on a good cloak, and Athene came up to him and gave him a more imposing presence, making him taller and stouter than before. When he came back his son was surprised to see him looking so like an immortal, and said to him, “My dear father, some one of the gods has been making you much taller and better-looking.”

Laertes answered, “Would, by Father Zeus, Athene, and Apollo, that I were the man I was when I ruled among the Cephallenians, and took Nericum, that strong fortress on the foreland. If I were still what I then was and had been in our house yesterday with my armour on, I should have been able to stand by you and help you against the suitors. I should have killed a great many of them, and you would have rejoiced to see it.”

Thus did they converse; but the others, when they had finished their work and the feast was ready, left off working, and took each his proper place on the benches and seats. Then they began eating; by and by old Dolius and his sons left their work and came up, for their mother, the Sicel woman who looked after Laertes now that he was growing old, had been to fetch them. When they saw Odysseus and were certain it was he, they stood there lost in astonishment; but Odysseus scolded them good naturedly and said, “Sit down to your dinner, old man, and never mind about your surprise; we have been wanting to begin for some time and have been waiting for you.”

Then Dolius put out both his hands and went up to Odysseus. “Sir,” said he, seizing his master’s hand and kissing it at the wrist, “we have long been wishing you home: and now heaven has restored you to us after we had given up hoping. All hail, therefore, and may the gods prosper you. But tell me, does Penelope already know of your return, or shall we send some one to tell her?”

“Old man,” answered Odysseus, “she knows already, so you need not trouble about that.” On this he took his seat, and the sons of Dolius gathered round Odysseus to give him greeting and embrace him one after the other; then they took their seats in due order near Dolius their father.

While they were thus busy getting their dinner ready, Rumour went round the town, and noised abroad the terrible fate that had befallen the suitors; as soon, therefore, as the people heard of it they gathered from every quarter, groaning and hooting before the house of Odysseus. They took the dead away, buried every man his own, and put the bodies of those who came from elsewhere on board the fishing vessels, for the fishermen to take each of them to his own place. They then met angrily in the place of assembly, and when they were got together Eupeithes rose to speak. He was overwhelmed with grief for the death of his son Antinous, who had been the first man killed by Odysseus, so he said, weeping bitterly, “My friends, this man has done the Achaeans great wrong. He took many of our best men away with him in his fleet, and he has lost both ships and men; now, moreover, on his return he has been killing all the foremost men among the Cephallenians. Let us be up and doing before he can get away to Pylos or to Elis where the Epeans rule, or we shall be ashamed of ourselves for ever afterwards. It will be an everlasting disgrace to us if we do not avenge the murder of our sons and brothers. For my own part I should have no more pleasure in life, but had rather die at once. Let us be up, then, and after them, before they can cross over to the main land.”

He wept as he spoke and every one pitied him. But Medon and the bard Phemius had now woke up, and came to them from the house of Odysseus. Every one was astonished at seeing them, but they stood in the middle of the assembly, and Medon said, “Hear me, men of Ithaca. Odysseus did not do these things against the will of heaven. I myself saw an immortal god take the form of Mentor and stand beside him. This god appeared, now in front of him encouraging him, and now going furiously about the court and attacking the suitors whereon they fell thick on one another.”

On this pale fear laid hold of them, and old Halitherses, son of Mastor, rose to speak, for he was the only man among them who knew both past and future; so he spoke to them plainly and in all honesty, saying,

“Men of Ithaca, it is all your own fault that things have turned out as they have; you would not listen to me, nor yet to Mentor, when we bade you

check the folly of your sons who were doing much wrong in the wantonness of their hearts – wasting the substance and dishonouring the wife of a chieftain who they thought would not return. Now, however, let it be as I say, and do as I tell you. Do not go out against Odysseus, or you may find that you have been drawing down evil on your own heads."

This was what he said, and more than half raised a loud shout, and at once left the assembly. But the rest stayed where they were, for the speech of Halitherses displeased them, and they sided with Eupeithes; they therefore hurried off for their armour, and when they had armed themselves, they met together in front of the city, and Eupeithes led them on in their folly. He thought he was going to avenge the murder of his son, whereas in truth he was never to return, but was himself to perish in his attempt.

Then Athene said to Zeus, "Father, son of Cronus, king of kings, answer me this question – What do you propose to do? Will you set them fighting still further, or will you make peace between them?"

And Zeus answered, "My child, why should you ask me? Was it not by your own arrangement that Odysseus came home and took his revenge upon the suitors? Do whatever you like, but I will tell you what I think will be most reasonable arrangement. Now that Odysseus is revenged, let them swear to a solemn covenant, in virtue of which he shall continue to rule, while we cause the others to forgive and forget the massacre of their sons and brothers. Let them then all become friends as heretofore, and let peace and plenty reign."

This was what Athene was already eager to bring about, so down she darted from off the topmost summits of Olympus.

Now when Laertes and the others had done dinner, Odysseus began by saying, "Some of you go out and see if they are not getting close up to us." So one of Dolius' sons went as he was bid. Standing on the threshold he could see them all quite near, and said to Odysseus, "Here they are, let us put on our armour at once."

They put on their armour as fast as they could – that is to say Odysseus, his three men, and the six sons of Dolius. Laertes also and Dolius did the same – warriors by necessity in spite of their grey hair. When they had all put on their armour, they opened the gate and sallied forth, Odysseus leading the way.

Then Zeus's daughter Athene came up to them, having assumed the form and voice of Mentor. Odysseus was glad when he saw her, and said to his son Telemachus, "Telemachus, now that you are about to fight in an engagement, which will show every man's mettle, be sure not to disgrace your ancestors, who were eminent for their strength and courage all the world over."

"You say truly, my dear father," answered Telemachus, "and you shall see, if you will, that I am in no mind to disgrace your family."

Laertes was delighted when he heard this. "Good heavens," he exclaimed, "what a day I am enjoying: I do indeed rejoice at it. My son and grandson are vying with one another in the matter of valour."

On this Athene came close up to him and said, "Son of Arceisius – best friend I have in the world – pray to the blue-eyed damsel, and to Zeus her father; then poise your spear and hurl it."

As she spoke she infused fresh vigour into him, and when he had prayed to her he poised his spear and hurled it. He hit Eupeithes' helmet, and the spear went right through it, for the helmet stayed it not, and his armour rang rattling round him as he fell heavily to the ground. Meantime Odysseus and his son fell upon the front line of the foe and smote them with their swords and spears; indeed, they would have killed every one of them, and prevented them from ever getting home again, only Athene raised her voice aloud, and made every one pause. "Men of Ithaca," she cried, "cease this dreadful war, and settle the matter at once without further bloodshed."

On this pale fear seized every one; they were so frightened that their arms dropped from their hands and fell upon the ground at the sound of the goddess' voice, and they fled back to the city for their lives. But Odysseus gave a great cry, and gathering himself together swooped down like a soaring eagle. Then the son of Cronus sent a thunderbolt of fire that fell just in front of Athene, so she said to Odysseus, "Odysseus, noble son of Laertes, stop this warful strife, or Zeus will be angry with you."

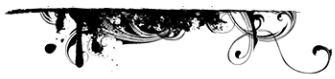
Thus spoke Athene, and Odysseus obeyed her gladly. Then Athene assumed the form and voice of Mentor, and presently made a covenant of peace between the two contending parties.

# Crime & Punishment

## Introduction

**THE GODS** were nothing if not vengeful, as has been seen repeatedly in the Greek epics, and any suggestion of hubris or irreverence on the mortal side was certainly to be punished. In some cases the Gods can seem to be overly sensitive to our modern sensibilites, but the Greeks did not question the all-powerful deities who had to be properly worshipped and appeased. However undoubtedly some humans were capable of truly wicked deeds and Tartarus was the portion of the Underworld reserved for their ingeniously devised punishments.

# Tartarus



**TARTARUS WAS A VAST** and gloomy expanse, as far below Hades as the earth is distant from the skies. There the Titans, fallen from their high estate, dragged out a dreary and monotonous existence; there also were Otus and Ephialtes, those giant sons of Poseidon, who, with impious hands, had attempted to scale Olympus and dethrone its mighty ruler. Principal among the sufferers in this abode of gloom were Tityus, Tantalus, Sisyphus, Ixion, and the Danaides.

Tityus, one of the earth-born giants, had insulted Hera on her way to Peitho, for which offence Zeus flung him into Tartarus, where he suffered dreadful torture, inflicted by two vultures, which perpetually gnawed his liver.

Tantalus was a wise and wealthy king of Lydia, with whom the gods themselves condescended to associate; he was even permitted to sit at table with Zeus, who delighted in his conversation, and listened with interest to the wisdom of his observations. Tantalus, however, elated at these distinguished marks of divine favour, presumed upon his position, and used unbecoming language to Zeus himself; he also stole nectar and ambrosia from the table of the gods, with which he regaled his friends; but his greatest crime consisted in killing his own son, Pelops, and serving him up at one of the banquets to the gods, in order to test their omniscience. For these heinous offences he was condemned by Zeus to eternal punishment in Tartarus, where, tortured with an ever-burning thirst, he was plunged up to the chin in water, which, as he stooped to drink, always receded from his parched lips. Tall trees, with spreading branches laden with delicious fruits, hung temptingly over his head; but no sooner did he raise himself to grasp them, than a wind arose, and carried them beyond his reach. Pelops meanwhile was resurrected by the gods, and more abut him can be read in the Myths of Love and Courage chapter.

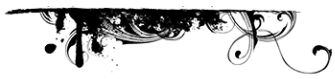
Sisyphus was a great tyrant who, according to some accounts, barbarously murdered all travellers who came into his dominions, by hurling upon them enormous pieces of rock. In punishment for his crimes

he was condemned to roll incessantly a huge block of stone up a steep hill, which, as soon as it reached the summit, always rolled back again to the plain below.

Ixion was a king of Thessaly to whom Zeus accorded the privilege of joining the festive banquets of the gods; but, taking advantage of his exalted position, he presumed to aspire to the favour of Hera, which so greatly incensed Zeus, that he struck him with his thunderbolts, and commanded Hermes to throw him into Tartarus, and bind him to an ever-revolving wheel.

The Danaides were the fifty daughters of Danaus, king of Argos, who had married their fifty cousins, the sons of Aegyptus. By the command of their father, who had been warned by an oracle that his son-in-law would cause his death, they all killed their husbands in one night, Hypermnestra alone excepted. Their punishment in the lower world was to fill with water a vessel full of holes, a never-ending and useless task.

# The Punishments of Apollo



**BUT THOUGH APOLLO** was so renowned in the art of music, there were two individuals who had the effrontery to consider themselves equal to him in this respect, and, accordingly, each challenged him to compete with them in a musical contest. These were Marsyas and Pan. Marsyas was a satyr, who, having picked up the flute which Athene had thrown away in disgust, discovered, to his great delight and astonishment, that, in consequence of its having touched the lips of a goddess, it played of itself in the most charming manner. Marsyas, who was a great lover of music, and much beloved on this account by all the elf-like denizens of the woods and glens, was so intoxicated with joy at this discovery, that he foolishly challenged Apollo to compete with him in a musical contest. The challenge being accepted, the Muses were chosen umpires, and it was decided that the unsuccessful candidate should suffer the punishment of being flayed alive. For a long time the merits of both claimants remained so equally balanced, that it was impossible to award the palm of victory to either, seeing which, Apollo, resolved to conquer, added the sweet tones of his melodious voice to the strains of his lyre, and this at once turned the scale in his favour. The unhappy Marsyas being defeated, had to undergo the terrible penalty, and his untimely fate was universally lamented; indeed the Satyrs and Dryads, his companions, wept so incessantly at his fate, that their tears, uniting together, formed a river in Phrygia which is still known by the name of Marsyas.

The result of the contest with Pan was by no means of so serious a character. The god of shepherds having affirmed that he could play more skilfully on his flute of seven reeds (the syrinx or Pan’s pipe), than Apollo on his world-renowned lyre, a contest ensued, in which Apollo was pronounced the victor by all the judges appointed to decide between the rival candidates. Midas, king of Phrygia, alone demurred at this decision, having the bad taste to prefer the uncouth tones of the Pan’s pipe to the refined melodies of Apollo’s lyre. Incensed at the obstinacy and stupidity of the Phrygian king, Apollo punished him by giving him the ears of an

ass. Midas, horrified at being thus disfigured, determined to hide his disgrace from his subjects by means of a cap; his barber, however, could not be kept in ignorance of the fact, and was therefore bribed with rich gifts never to reveal it. Finding, however, that he could not keep the secret any longer, he dug a hole in the ground into which he whispered it; then closing up the aperture he returned home, feeling greatly relieved at having thus eased his mind of its burden. But after all, this very humiliating secret was revealed to the world, for some reeds which sprung up from the spot murmured incessantly, as they waved to and fro in the wind: “King Midas has the ears of an ass.”

In the sad and beautiful story of Niobe, daughter of Tantalus, and wife of Amphion, king of Thebes, we have another instance of the severe punishments meted out by Apollo to those who in any way incurred his displeasure. Niobe was the proud mother of seven sons and seven daughters, and exulting in the number of her children, she, upon one occasion, ridiculed the worship of Leto, because she had but one son and daughter, and desired the Thebans, for the future, to give to her the honours and sacrifices which they had hitherto offered to the mother of Apollo and Artemis. The sacrilegious words had scarcely passed her lips before Apollo called upon his sister Artemis to assist him in avenging the insult offered to their mother, and soon their invisible arrows sped through the air. Apollo slew all the sons, and Artemis had already slain all the daughters save one, the youngest and best beloved, whom Niobe clasped in her arms, when the agonized mother implored the enraged deities to leave her, at least, one out of all her beautiful children; but, even as she prayed, the deadly arrow reached the heart of this child also. Meanwhile the unhappy father, unable to bear the loss of his children, had destroyed himself, and his dead body lay beside the lifeless corpse of his favourite son. Widowed and childless, the heart-broken mother sat among her dead, and the gods, in pity for her unutterable woe, turned her into a stone, which they transferred to Siphylus, her native Phrygian mountain, where it still continues to shed tears.

# The Calydonian Boar Hunt

**ARTEMIS RESENTED** any disregard or neglect of her worship; a remarkable instance of this is shown in the story of the Calydonian boar hunt, which is as follows:

Oeneus, king of Calydon in Aetolia, had incurred the displeasure of Artemis by neglecting to include her in a general sacrifice to the gods which he had offered up, out of gratitude for a bountiful harvest. The goddess, enraged at this neglect, sent a wild boar of extraordinary size and prodigious strength, which destroyed the sprouting grain, laid waste the fields, and threatened the inhabitants with famine and death. At this juncture, Meleager, the brave son of Oeneus, returned from the Argonautic expedition, and finding his country ravaged by this dreadful scourge, entreated the assistance of all the celebrated heroes of the age to join him in hunting the ferocious monster. Among the most famous of those who responded to his call were Jason, Castor and Polydeuces, Idas and Lynceus, Peleus, Telamon, Admetus, Perithous, and Theseus. The brothers of Althea, wife of Oeneus, joined the hunters, and Meleager also enlisted into his service the fleet-footed huntress Atalanta.

The father of this maiden was Schoeneus, an Arcadian, who, disappointed at the birth of a daughter when he had particularly desired a son, had exposed her on the Parthenian Hill, where he left her to perish. Here she was nursed by a she-bear, and at last found by some hunters, who reared her, and gave her the name of Atalanta. As the maiden grew up, she became an ardent lover of the chase, and was alike distinguished for her beauty and courage. Though often wooed, she led a life of strict celibacy, an oracle having predicted that inevitable misfortune awaited her, should she give herself in marriage to any of her numerous suitors.

Many of the heroes objected to hunt in company with a maiden; but Meleager, who loved Atalanta, overcame their opposition, and the valiant band set out on their expedition. Atalanta was the first to wound the boar with her spear, but not before two of the heroes had met their death from his fierce tusks. After a long and desperate encounter, Meleager succeeded

in killing the monster, and presented the head and hide to Atalanta, as trophies of the victory. The uncles of Meleager, however, forcibly took the hide from the maiden, claiming their right to the spoil as next of kin, if Meleager resigned it. Artemis, whose anger was still unappeased, caused a violent quarrel to arise between uncles and nephew, and, in the struggle which ensued, Meleager killed his mother's brothers, and then restored the hide to Atalanta. When Althea beheld the dead bodies of the slain heroes, her grief and anger knew no bounds. She swore to revenge the death of her brothers on her own son, and unfortunately for him, the instrument of vengeance lay ready to her hand.

At the birth of Meleager, the Moirae, or Fates, entered the house of Oeneus, and pointing to a piece of wood then burning on the hearth, declared that as soon as it was consumed the babe would surely die. On hearing this, Althea seized the brand, laid it up carefully in a chest, and henceforth preserved it as her most precious possession. But now, love for her son giving place to the resentment she felt against the murderer of her brothers, she threw the fatal brand into the devouring flames. As it consumed, the vigour of Meleager wasted away, and when it was reduced to ashes, he expired. Repenting too late the terrible effects of her rash deed, Althea, in remorse and despair, took away her own life.

The news of the courage and intrepidity displayed by Atalanta in the famous boar hunt, being carried to the ears of her father, caused him to acknowledge his long-lost child. Urged by him to choose one of her numerous suitors, she consented to do so, but made it a condition that he alone, who could outstrip her in the race, should become her husband, whilst those she defeated should be put to death by her, with the lance which she bore in her hand. Thus many suitors had perished, for the maiden was unequalled for swiftness of foot, but at last a beautiful youth, named Hippomenes, who had vainly endeavoured to win her love by his assiduous attentions in the chase, ventured to enter the fatal lists. Knowing that only by stratagem could he hope to be successful, he obtained, by the help of Aphrodite, three golden apples from the garden of the Hesperides, which he threw down at intervals during his course. Atalanta, secure of victory, stooped to pick up the tempting fruit, and, in the meantime, Hippomenes arrived at the goal. He became the husband of the lovely Atalanta, but forgot, in his newly found happiness, the gratitude which he

owed to Aphrodite, and the goddess withdrew her favour from the pair. Not long after, the prediction which foretold misfortune to Atalanta, in the event of her marriage, was verified, for she and her husband, having strayed unsanctioned into a sacred grove of Zeus, were both transformed into lions.

The trophies of the ever-memorable boar hunt had been carried by Atalanta into Arcadia, and, for many centuries, the identical hide and enormous tusks of the Calydonian boar hung in the temple of Athene at Tegea. The tusks were afterwards conveyed to Rome, and shown there among other curiosities.

A similar forcible instance of the manner in which Artemis resented any intrusion on her retirement, is seen in the fate which befell the famous hunter Actaeon, who happening one day to see Artemis and her attendants bathing, imprudently ventured to approach the spot. The goddess, incensed at his audacity, sprinkled him with water, and transformed him into a stag, whereupon he was torn in pieces and devoured by his own dogs.

# The Cattle of Admetus

**HERMES WAS THE SON** of Zeus and Maia, the eldest and most beautiful of the seven Pleiades (daughters of Atlas), and was born in a cave of Mount Cyllene in Arcadia. As a mere babe, he exhibited an extraordinary faculty for cunning and dissimulation; in fact, he was a thief from his cradle, for, not many hours after his birth, we find him creeping stealthily out of the cave in which he was born, in order to steal some oxen belonging to his brother Apollo, who was at this time feeding the flocks of Admetus. But he had not proceeded very far on his expedition before he found a tortoise, which he killed, and, stretching seven strings across the empty shell, invented a lyre, upon which he at once began to play with exquisite skill. When he had sufficiently amused himself with the instrument, he placed it in his cradle, and then resumed his journey to Pieria, where the cattle of Admetus were grazing. Arriving at sunset at his destination, he succeeded in separating fifty oxen from his brother's herd, which he now drove before him, taking the precaution to cover his feet with sandals made of twigs of myrtle, in order to escape detection. But the little rogue was not unobserved, for the theft had been witnessed by an old shepherd named Battus, who was tending the flocks of Neleus, king of Pylos (father of Nestor). Hermes, frightened at being discovered, bribed him with the finest cow in the herd not to betray him, and Battus promised to keep the secret. But Hermes, astute as he was dishonest, determined to test the shepherd's integrity. Feigning to go away, he assumed the form of Admetus, and then returning to the spot offered the old man two of his best oxen if he would disclose the author of the theft. The ruse succeeded, for the avaricious shepherd, unable to resist the tempting bait, gave the desired information, upon which Hermes, exerting his divine power, changed him into a lump of touchstone, as a punishment for his treachery and avarice. Hermes now killed two of the oxen, which he sacrificed to himself and the other gods, concealing the remainder in the cave. He then carefully extinguished the fire, and, after throwing his twig shoes into the river Alpheus, returned to Cyllene.

Apollo, by means of his all-seeing power, soon discovered who it was that had robbed him, and hastening to Cyllene, demanded restitution of his property. On his complaining to Maia of her son's conduct, she pointed to the innocent babe then lying, apparently fast asleep, in his cradle, whereupon, Apollo angrily aroused the pretended sleeper, and charged him with the theft; but the child stoutly denied all knowledge of it, and so cleverly did he play his part, that he even inquired in the most naive manner what sort of animals cows were. Apollo threatened to throw him into Tartarus if he would not confess the truth, but all to no purpose. At last, he seized the babe in his arms, and brought him into the presence of his august father, who was seated in the council chamber of the gods. Zeus listened to the charge made by Apollo, and then sternly desired Hermes to say where he had hidden the cattle. The child, who was still in swaddling-clothes, looked up bravely into his father's face and said, "Now, do I look capable of driving away a herd of cattle; I, who was only born yesterday, and whose feet are much too soft and tender to tread in rough places? Until this moment, I lay in sweet sleep on my mother's bosom, and have never even crossed the threshold of our dwelling. You know well that I am not guilty; but, if you wish, I will affirm it by the most solemn oaths."

As the child stood before him, looking the picture of innocence, Zeus could not refrain from smiling at his cleverness and cunning, but, being perfectly aware of his guilt, he commanded him to conduct Apollo to the cave where he had concealed the herd, and Hermes, seeing that further subterfuge was useless, unhesitatingly obeyed. But when the divine shepherd was about to drive his cattle back into Pieria, Hermes, as though by chance, touched the chords of his lyre. Hitherto Apollo had heard nothing but the music of his own three-stringed lyre and the syrinx, or Pan's pipe, and, as he listened entranced to the delightful strains of this new instrument, his longing to possess it became so great, that he gladly offered the oxen in exchange, promising at the same time, to give Hermes full dominion over flocks and herds, as well as over horses, and all the wild animals of the woods and forests. The offer was accepted, and, a reconciliation being thus effected between the brothers, Hermes became henceforth god of herdsmen, whilst Apollo devoted himself enthusiastically to the art of music.

They now proceeded together to Olympus, where Apollo introduced Hermes as his chosen friend and companion, and, having made him swear by the Styx, that he would never steal his lyre or bow, nor invade his sanctuary at Delphi, he presented him with the Caduceus, or golden wand. This wand was surmounted by wings, and on presenting it to Hermes, Apollo informed him that it possessed the faculty of uniting in love, all beings divided by hate. Wishing to prove the truth of this assertion, Hermes threw it down between two snakes which were fighting, whereupon the angry combatants clasped each other in a loving embrace, and curling round the staff, remained ever after permanently attached to it. The wand itself typified power; the serpents, wisdom; and the wings, despatch – all qualities characteristic of a trustworthy ambassador.

The young god was now presented by his father with a winged silver cap (Petasus), and also with silver wings for his feet (Talaria), and was forthwith appointed herald of the gods, and conductor of shades to Hades, which office had hitherto been filled by Hades.

# Myths of Love & Courage

## Introduction

**THE GODS AND GODDESSES** of Greece were the creators of the earth, makers of the universe and rulers thereafter. In their hectic lives, governed by deep-seated jealousies, petty hatreds, overwhelming passion and love, and desperate bids for revenge, there were other beings, mortals who led lives cast in the shadows of these greater entities. But it was also the acts of these mortals which became tools of understanding for the Greeks, for how could they make sense of the world in which they lived without the interaction of mankind with gods? From where came the echo in the deep valleys of Greece; how do you explain the powerful spirits of the woodland, the waters, the winds? These are the tales of mystery and enchantment which form some of the most exquisite allegories in literature worldwide; they speak of love, desire, deceit and trickery; they explain all.

# Orpheus and Eurydice

**THE MUSIC OF ORPHEUS** was known across the lands. With his lyre, he played the sweetest strains which lulled even the fiercest beasts into a peaceful rapture. For his music Orpheus was loved, and he travelled far and wide, issuing forth melodies that were pure, sublime.

Orpheus was the son of Apollo and the muse Calliope. He lived in Thrace and spent his days singing, playing the music that spread his fame still further. One day, Orpheus came across a gentle and very beautiful young nymph, who danced to his music as if she was born to do so. She was called Eurydice, and wings seemed to lift her heels, as she played and frolicked to his music. And then, when their eyes caught, it was clear that it was love at first sight and that their destiny was to be shared.

It was only a few days later that they were joined in marriage, and never before had such an angelic couple existed. As they danced on the eve of their wedding, the very trees and flowers, the winds and rushing streams paused and then shouted their congratulations. The world stopped to watch, to approve, to celebrate.

And then that most sinister of animals, a stealthy viper, made its way into the babbling midst and struck at the ankle of Eurydice, sending her to an icy, instant death. Eurydice sank down in the circle, and all efforts to revive her failed. Time seemed to stop. Certainly there was no music, anywhere.

Orpheus was disconsolate with grief. He could not even bring himself to bury her, and he played on his lyre such tunes that even the rocks, the hardened fabric of the caves, shed tears. After several days he came to a decision which seemed at once as clear and as necessary as anything he had ever undertaken.

Orpheus made his way to the Underworld, determined to rescue his great love. His lyre in hand, his heart pounding with emotion, he reached the river Styx, the black waterway which snakes its way into the Underworld, which divides the other world from our own. There he played his lute so

tunefully, so eloquently, that Charon, the ferryman, took him across the river at no charge, granted access to a place into which no mortal must go.

As Orpheus was drawn deeper into the Underworld, grisly, frightening sights greeted his eyes, but he continued to play his soulful tune, filling with tears the eyes of those cast in wretched purgatory, the ghosts of beings who had done ill deeds, the spirits of men who had been cursed. He played on and on, his music seeping into the blackness and creating an effortless light which guided the way.

At the end of his journey King Hades and Queen Persephone sat, entranced by his music. They knew of his mission. They would allow him to take Eurydice. His music had unwound the rigours of their rules, of their laws, and momentarily appeased, temporarily relaxed, they permitted Orpheus to take one of their own.

There was a condition, as there is in all such matters. Orpheus could have his bride returned to him; she would follow him as his shadow. But he must not look back on his trip from their world. The music from Orpheus' lyre picked up the timbre of his pleasure and took on a jaunty character which brought a look of surprise to the stony faces of Hades' guards. Orpheus turned and made his way back to the Styx, to his world, to home and Eurydice.

The gate of the Underworld was in sight when Orpheus felt an overwhelming need to confirm that Eurydice was there. Instinctively, he turned towards his great love, and there she stood, shrouded in a dark cape. As he reached for her, just as he felt the warmth of her skin, her breath on his cheek, she vanished, drawn back into death, into the darkened world of the afterlife.

Orpheus left the Underworld alone, and when he returned to his land, he lay broken and wasted on the shores of the Styx. For the rest of his short life he wandered among the hills, carrying a broken lyre which he would not mend and could not play. He cared for nothing. He was attacked, one day, without the powers to play, to appease his enemy. His attackers were a throng of Thracian women who killed him, and tore him to pieces. His lyre was taken to Lesbos, where it became a shrine, and some years later, his head was washed upon the shores of the island. There it was joined with his sacred lyre, its broken strings representing forever the broken heart of Orpheus.

# Echo and Narcissus

**ECHO WAS A WOOD NYMPH** who danced and sang in the forest. She told engaging stories to anyone who would listen, and although she was adored by the other nymphs her headstrong ways meant that none of her playmates had the last word. Echo would skip and frolic among the trees, charming the small creatures and befriending the forest folk as she played.

Hera was enchanted by the nubile young nymph, and she came daily to hear Echo's tales of adventure, of fairies and of far-off places, stories that grew ever more complicated with each telling. One day Hera left earlier than usual, inspired to see her husband Zeus by Echo's romantic tales. It was on this day that Hera was presented with evidence of her husband's philanderings, and discovered that Echo had been involved in the subterfuge, receiving a wage from Zeus to occupy his lovely wife.

Hera flew into a rage which resounded through the Kingdom, and the victim of her wrath was Echo, who was stripped of her power of speech, able only to echo the last words spoken by any person. Echo fled deep into the forest, tortured by her speechlessness, drained of her life and vitality.

Now in this same forest lived a handsome young man named Narcissus, a Thespian and the son of the blue nymph Leirope and the River-god Cephisus. When Narcissus was but a child, his mother consulted the seer Tiresias to learn of his fortune. Would he live to old age? she longed to know.

"If he never knows himself," said the wise man.

Tales of Narcissus' beauty had spread far and wide and it was not long before a he grew conceited and self-satisfied. Lovers came and went, but Narcissus' heart grew colder, frosted by the knowledge that none could match his charm and grace.

Echo had been drawn to the youth for many months, and secretly followed him in the forest, begging him silently to speak so she could make her presence known. One day her wish was granted, and Narcissus, who had lost his companions in the forest, called out, 'Is anyone here?"

"Here," cried the young nymph with delight.

“Come!” replied Narcissus, his face a haughty mask.

“Come!” repeated Echo.

“Why do you avoid me?” asked Narcissus, a surprised look crossing his face.

“Why do you avoid me?” said Echo.

“Let us come together,” he shouted, with careless confidence. He looked purposefully around, his manly brow furrowed with intrigue.

“Let us come together.” And as the words tumbled from Echo’s tender lips, she leapt from her hiding place, and threw herself against the comely young man.

He stepped back in horror, roughly detaching himself from her grasp, and snarling, “I will die before you ever lay with me!” Summoning up the arrogance of his youth, he cast Echo aside and left the clearing, failing to hear her pleading “Lay with me…” as he stalked away.

Echo grew cold with misery, and unable to draw breath, she lay still and pined for her lost love, the vessel for her childish hopes and aspirations. There Echo laid until she was no more than her voice, her tiny body becoming one with the woodland floor.

Narcissus quickly forgot this uneasy encounter, and carried on his relentless search for love. One day, deep in the forest, he stopped his hunting in order to take a drink from a pure, clear stream. As he leant over the crystal waters he was caught by such a sight of beauty that his breath escaped in a stunned gasp. There, in this magical current, was a face of such perfect loveliness that Narcissus was unable to move, to call out.

He whispered to the dazzling illusion, but though the lips of this creature moved, too, no sound was uttered. Narcissus was enchanted.

He reached forwards to the elegant face, the princely features, but alas, with every movement the object of his passion disappeared in a kaleidoscope of colour.

Narcissus had fallen in love with his own reflection, and he was held captive by its magnificence. He reclined by the stream, unable to move, and there he laid without food or water until he too pined away, to become one with the forest. The last words to slip from his aristocratic lips were,

“O youth beloved in vain. Farewell.” To which the spirit of the love-sickened nymph Echo replied, “Farewell.”

Those who had once swooned for Narcissus prepared his funeral pyre, but his body had disappeared. In its place grew a slim and elegant flower with a blood-red heart, which gazed piteously at its reflection as it dipped over the water. Today, this flower can be found by the waters of certain streams, a flower known for its beauty, which gazes eternally at its own reflection.

The spirit of Echo is often heard, for she fled that forest, and wanders far from the shores of that stream, ever searching for her lost love, and, of course, her voice.

# Icarus and Daedalus

**IN THE CITY OF ATHENS** lived Daedalus, an inventor and artisan renowned across the world for his skill and genius. He loved nothing more than to create masterpieces of invention and wonder, except the recognition and admiration his talents won him. On fearing that his nephew and apprentice would one day surpass his lofty skills, Daedalus murdered the boy in cold blood. He and his family then fled to Crete. It was here that King Minos requested his service for a very special purpose.

The King had a monster living among his household, one that was cursed with insatiable, unnatural appetites. This miscreation was the Minotaur, the half-bull, half-human progeny of Minos' wife, Pasiphae. Pasiphae had been enchanted to fall in love with the bull of Poseidon. Her blood boiling in lust for the magnificent beast, Pasiphae demanded that Daedalus build her a contraption so that the bull could mount her. The resulting offspring was the atrocity that grew into the uncontrollable Minotaur. Seeking advice from the Delphic oracle, Minos was told to build a creation dense and elaborate enough to house the beast safely. For this, Minos needed Daedalus. Eager to test his skills, Daedalus accepted and, taking his son Icarus, he set off to Minos' palace to begin work on the Labyrinth, which would be his most extraordinary work.

The Labyrinth was an immense maze in the ground of Minos' palace. Daedalus used every method he could think of in the formation of his masterpiece; dead ends, winding passages, shadowy corners and pathways that never seemed to end, driving anyone trapped within to the very edge of insanity and beyond. So cunning was the Labyrinth that Daedalus himself was almost doomed among its dark and convoluted corridors. The complex twists and perplexing turns successfully trapped the Minotaur, who was kept contented by annual sacrifices of seven youths and seven maidens for him to hunt down and gorge upon at will.

But Minos did not react as Daedalus expected. Instead of showering him with praise and riches, the king was desperate to ensure that no one would ever discover the secret of the great Labyrinth. He trapped Daedalus and

his son in a tall tower to ensure that the dark mystery of the Labyrinth would forever be protected. And so the days passed, but Minos would not release his prisoners. He even took the precaution of having the routes out of Crete by both land and sea guarded. But Daedalus was also crafty, as well as resourceful. The time came when he grew desperately weary of his enforced capture. Never forgetting that his beloved son had been imprisoned because of his ambition and love of fame, Daedalus plotted to win their freedom.

Daedalus began collecting the supplies they would need for their escape. Careful not to arouse suspicion in the King, he knew he would have to use natural objects where possible. He also knew that Minos was watching the roads and sea, which left only one way for escape. They would have to fly.

Daedalus set to work making wings for himself and Icarus. Basing them on the natural curve of a bird's wing, he carefully bound together layers and layers of feathers with cord and sealed the binding with wax, without which the feathers would be pulled out of the cords during flight. He took the utmost care in his creation, placing the wings in order of size from smallest to largest. Finally, the instruments of freedom were ready. Trialling them, Daedalus strapped his wings in place and flapped his arms. The movement caught the wind and lifted him up into the air where he was able to hover above the ground.

Ecstatic with joy at the thought of their approaching freedom, Icarus – a tempestuous boy with little of his father's foresight – wanted immediately to set off for home. Tempering his son's eagerness, Daedalus again impressed upon Icarus how to get home safely. They had to avoid both the spray from the sea that would weigh down the wings and the heat from the sun, which would melt the wax securing the wings together.

Father and son took flight, leaving their tower of captivity forever. As they flew, Crete growing smaller behind them, both grew lighter at heart at the thought of home. Passing landmarks, ever hopeful that they would reach the shores of Athens, Daedalus' heart filled with heady pride at his construction. But he was overconfident. His invention – masterful as it was – was imperfect.

Icarus, his reckless boy, had inherited some of his father's ego. Feeling invincible, all warnings about how to fly safely flew from his mind. As the Aegean sea glittered beneath him, Icarus felt like a king up there in the

heavens, so he flew higher and higher so as to fly among the gods. However the blazing sun caused the wax holding his precious wings together to melt. Desperately trying to regain control, Icarus swooped downwards to escape the sun's burning rays. But it was too late. Before his father could even make a move to help him, Icarus – with barely time to give his beloved father one final glance – plummeted to his death. Landing heavily in the deep, dark sea, Icarus breathed his last.

Wracked with grief, Daedalus was almost unable to complete his journey home, the sweet sensation of liberty forever tainted by his tragic loss. In homage to his son, and as a permanent reminder of the grief and loss caused by his pride and arrogance, Daedalus named the land nearest to Icarus' place of death Icaria, which it remains to this day.

# Bellerephon

**BELLEREPHON**, a brave young prince, the grandson of Sisyphus, King of Corinth, had the great misfortune to kill his own brother while hunting in the forest. His grief was, of course, intense; and the horror he felt for the place where the catastrophe had occurred, added to his fear lest he should incur judicial punishment for his involuntary crime, made him flee to the court of Argos, where he took refuge with Proetus, the king, who was also his kinsman.

He had not sojourned there very long, before Anteia, the queen, fell in love with him; and although her husband, Proetus, treated her with the utmost kindness, she made up her mind to desert him, and tried to induce Bellerophon to elope with her. Too honest to betray a man who had treated him as a friend, the young prince refused to listen to the queen's proposals. His refusal was to cost him dear, however; for, when Anteia saw that the youth would never yield to her wishes, she became very angry indeed, sought her husband, and accused the young stranger of crimes he had never even dreamed of committing.

Proetus, indignant at what he deemed deep treachery on the part of an honored guest, yet reluctant to punish him with his own hand as he deserved, sent Bellerophon to Iobates, King of Lycia, with a sealed message bidding him put the bearer to death.

Quite unconscious of the purport of this letter, Bellerophon traveled gayly onward, and presented himself before Iobates, who received him very hospitably, and, without inquiring his name or errand, entertained him royally for many days. After some time, Bellerophon suddenly remembered the sealed message intrusted to his care, and hastened to deliver it to Iobates, with many apologies for his forgetfulness.

With blanched cheeks and every outward sign of horror, the king read the missive, and then fell into a deep reverie. He did not like to take a stranger's life, and still could not refuse to comply with Proetus' urgent request: so, after much thought, he decided to send Bellerophon to attack

the Chimera, a terrible monster with a lion’s head, a goat’s body, and a dragon’s tail.

His principal motive in choosing this difficult task was, that, although many brave men had set forth to slay the monster, none had ever returned, for one and all had perished in the attempt.

Although very courageous, Bellerophon’s heart beat fast with fear when told what great deed he must accomplish; and he left Iobates’ palace very sorrowfully, for he dearly loved the king’s fair daughter, Philonoe, and was afraid he would never see her again.

While thus inwardly bewailing the ill luck which had so persistently dogged his footsteps, Bellerophon suddenly saw Athene appear before him in all her splendor, and heard her inquire in gentle tones the cause of his too evident dejection. He had no sooner apprised her of the difficult task appointed him, than she promised him her aid, and before she vanished gave him a beautiful golden bridle, which she bade him use to control Pegasus.

Bridle in hand, Bellerophon stood pondering her words, and gradually remembered that Pegasus was a wonderful winged steed, born from the blood which fell into the foam of the sea from Medusa’s severed head. This horse, as white as snow, and gifted with immortal life as well as incredible speed, was the favourite mount of Apollo and the Muses, who delighted in taking aerial flights on his broad back; and Bellerophon knew that from time to time he came down to earth to drink of the cool waters of the Hippocrene (a fountain which had bubbled forth where his hoofs first touched the earth), or to visit the equally limpid spring of Pirene, near Corinth.

Bellerophon now proceeded to the latter fountain, where, after lingering many days in the vain hope of catching even a glimpse of the winged steed, he finally beheld him sailing downward in wide curves, like a bird of prey. From his place of concealment in a neighboring thicket, Bellerophon watched his opportunity, and, while the winged steed was grazing, he boldly vaulted upon his back.

Pegasus, who had never before been ridden by a mortal, reared and pranced, and flew up to dizzy heights; but all his efforts failed to unseat the brave rider, who, biding his time, finally thrust Athene’s golden bit between his teeth, and immediately he became gentle and tractable.

Mounted upon this incomparable steed, Bellerophon now went in search of the winged monster Chimera, who had given birth to the Nemean lion and to the riddle-loving Sphinx.

From an unclouded sky Bellerophon and Pegasus swooped suddenly and unexpectedly down upon the terrible Chimera, whose fiery breath and great strength were of no avail; for after a protracted struggle Bellerophon and Pegasus were victorious, and the monster lay lifeless upon the blood-soaked ground.

This mighty deed of valor accomplished, Bellerophon returned to Iobates, to report the success of his undertaking; and, although the king was heartily glad to know the Chimera was no more, he was very sorry to see Bellerophon safe and sound, and tried to devise some other plan to get rid of him.

He therefore sent him to fight the Amazons; but the hero, aided by the gods, defeated these warlike women also, and returned to Lycia, where, after escaping from an ambush posted by the king for his destruction, he again appeared victorious at court.

These repeated and narrow escapes from certain death convinced Iobates that the youth was under the special protection of the gods; and this induced the king not only to forego further attempts to slay him, but also to bestow upon the young hero his daughter’s hand in marriage.

Bellerophon, having now attained his dearest wishes, might have settled down in peace; but his head had been utterly turned by the many lofty flights he had taken upon Pegasus’ back, and, encouraged by the fulsome flattery of his courtiers, he finally fancied himself the equal of the immortal gods, and wished to join them in their celestial abode.

Summoning his faithful Pegasus once more, he rose higher and higher, and would probably have reached Olympus’ heights, had not Zeus sent a gadfly, which stung poor Pegasus so cruelly, that he shied viciously, and flung his too confident rider far down to the earth below.

This fall, which would doubtless have killed any one but a mythological hero, merely deprived Bellerophon of his eyesight; and ever after he groped his way disconsolately, thinking of the happy days when he rode along the paths of air, and gazed upon the beautiful earth at his feet.

Bellerophon, mounted upon Pegasus, winging his flight through the air or fighting the Chimera, is a favourite subject in sculpture and painting,

which has frequently been treated by ancient artists, a few of whose most noted works are still extant in various museums.

This story, like many others, is merely a sun myth, in which Bellerophon, the orb of day, rides across the sky on Pegasus, the fleecy white clouds, and slays Chimera, the dread monster of darkness, which he alone can overcome. Driven from home early in life, Bellerophon wanders throughout the world like his brilliant prototype, and, like it, ends his career in total darkness.

# Pelops

**PELOPS, THE SON** of the cruel Tantalus, was a pious and virtuous prince. After his father was banished into Tartarus, a war ensued between Pelops and the king of Troy, in which the former was vanquished and forced to fly from his dominions in Phrygia. He emigrated into Greece, where, at the court of Oenomaus, king of Elis, he beheld Hippodamia, the king's daughter, whose beauty won his heart. But an oracle having foretold to Oenomaus that he would die on the day of his daughter's marriage, he threw every obstacle in the way of her suitors, and declared that he would only give her to him who succeeded in vanquishing him in a chariot race, but that all unsuccessful competitors should suffer death at his hands.

The conditions of the contest were as follows: The race was to be run from a given point at Pisa to the altar of Poseidon at Corinth; the suitor was allowed to start on his course whilst Oenomaus performed his sacrifice to Zeus, and only on its completion did the king mount his chariot, guided by the skilful Myrtilus, and drawn by his two famous horses, Phylla and Harpinna, who surpassed in swiftness the winds themselves. In this manner many a gallant young prince had perished; for although a considerable start was given to all competitors, still Oenomaus, with his swift team, always overtook them before they reached the goal, and killed them with his spear. But the love of Pelops for Hippodamia overcame all fears, and, undeterred by the terrible fate of his predecessors, he announced himself to Oenomaus as a suitor for the hand of his daughter.

On the eve of the race, Pelops repaired to the sea-shore and earnestly implored Poseidon to assist him in his perilous undertaking. The sea-god heard his prayer, and sent him out of the deep a chariot drawn by two winged horses.

When Pelops appeared on the course, the king at once recognized the horses of Poseidon; but, nothing daunted, he relied on his own supernatural team, and the contest was allowed to proceed.

Whilst the king was offering his sacrifice to Zeus, Pelops set out on the race, and had nearly reached the goal, when, turning round, he beheld Oenomaus, spear in hand, who, with his magic steeds, had nearly overtaken him. But in this emergency Poseidon came to the aid of the son of Tantalus. He caused the wheels of the royal chariot to fly off, whereupon the king was thrown out violently, and killed on the spot, just as Pelops arrived at the altar of Poseidon.

As the hero was about to return to Pisa to claim his bride, he beheld, in the distance, flames issuing from the royal castle, which at that instant had been struck by lightning. With his winged horses he flew to rescue his lovely bride, and succeeded in extricating her uninjured from the burning building. They soon afterwards became united, and Pelops reigned in Pisa for many years in great splendour.

# Ion

**ION WAS THE SON** of Creusa (the beauteous daughter of Erechtheus, king of Athens) and the sun-god Phoebus-Apollo, to whom she was united without the knowledge of her father.

Fearing the anger of Erechtheus, Creusa placed her new-born babe in a little wicker basket, and hanging some golden charms round his neck, invoked for him the protection of the gods, and concealed him in a lonely cave. Apollo, pitying his deserted child, sent Hermes to convey him to Delphi, where he deposited his charge on the steps of the temple. Next morning the Delphic priestess discovered the infant, and was so charmed by his engaging appearance that she adopted him as her own son. The young child was carefully tended and reared by his kind foster-mother, and was brought up in the service of the temple, where he was intrusted with some of the minor duties of the holy edifice.

And now to return to Creusa. During a war with the Euboeans, in which the latter were signally defeated, Xuthus, son of Aeolus, greatly distinguished himself on the side of the Athenians, and as a reward for his valuable services, the hand of Creusa, the king’s daughter, was bestowed upon him in marriage. Their union, however, was not blest with children, and as this was a source of great grief to both of them, they repaired to Delphi in order to consult the oracle. The response was, that Xuthus should regard the first person who met him on leaving the sanctuary as his son. Now it happened that Ion, the young guardian of the temple, was the first to greet his view, and when Xuthus beheld the beautiful youth, he gladly welcomed him as his son, declaring that the gods had sent him to be a blessing and comfort to his old age. Creusa, however, who concluded that the youth was the offspring of a secret marriage on the part of her husband, was filled with suspicion and jealousy; when an old servant, observing her grief, begged her to be comforted, assuring her that the cause of her distress should be speedily removed.

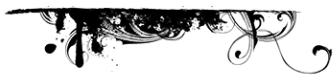
When, upon the occasion of the public adoption of his son, Xuthus gave a grand banquet, the old servant of Creusa contrived to mix a strong poison

in the wine of the unsuspecting Ion. But the youth – according to the pious custom of the ancients, of offering a libation to the gods before partaking of any repast – poured upon the ground a portion of the wine before putting it to his lips, when suddenly, as if by a miracle, a dove flew into the banquet-hall, and sipped of the wine of the libation; whereupon the poor little creature began to quiver in every limb, and in a few moments expired.

Ion’s suspicions at once fell upon the obsequious servant of Creusa, who with such officious attention had filled his cup. He violently seized the old man, and accused him of his murderous intentions. Unprepared for this sudden attack he admitted his guilt, but pointed to the wife of Xuthus as the instigator of the crime. Ion was about to avenge himself upon Creusa, when, by means of the divine intervention of Apollo, his foster-mother, the Delphic priestess appeared on the scene, and explained the true relationship which existed between Creusa and Ion. In order to set all doubts at rest, she produced the charms which she had found round the neck of the infant, and also the wicker basket in which he had been conveyed to Delphi.

Mother and son now became reconciled to each other, and Creusa revealed to Ion the secret of his divine origin. The priestess of Delphi foretold that he would become the father of a great nation, called after him the Ionians, and also that Xuthus and Creusa would have a son called Dorus, who would be the progenitor of the Dorian people, both of which predictions were in due time verified.

# Philemon and Baucis

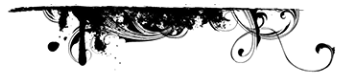


**THE GREEKS SUPPOSED** that the divine ruler of the Universe occasionally assumed a human form, and descended from his celestial abode, in order to visit mankind and observe their proceedings, his aim being generally either to punish the guilty, or to reward the deserving.

On one occasion Zeus, accompanied by Hermes, made a journey through Phrygia, seeking hospitality and shelter wherever they went. But nowhere did they receive a kindly welcome till they came to the humble cottage of an old man and his wife called Philemon and Baucis, who entertained them with the greatest kindness, setting before them what frugal fare their humble means permitted, and bidding them welcome with unaffected cordiality. Observing in the course of their simple repast that the wine bowl was miraculously replenished, the aged couple became convinced of the divine nature of their guests. The gods now informed them that on account of its wickedness their native place was doomed to destruction, and told them to climb the neighbouring hill with them, which overlooked the village where they dwelt. What was their dismay on beholding at their feet, in place of the spot where they had passed so many happy years together, nothing but a watery plain, the only house to be seen being their own little cottage, which suddenly changed itself into a temple before their eyes. Zeus now asked the worthy pair to name any wish they particularly desired and it should be granted. They accordingly begged that they might serve the gods in the temple below, and end life together.

Their wish was granted, for, after spending the remainder of their lives in the worship of the gods, they both died at the same instant, and were transformed by Zeus into trees, remaining for ever side by side.

# Loves of the Gods



## Introduction

**THE GODS** have been seen to be capable of many strong emotions, and they loved no less passionately. They loved and married amongst themselves but were also constantly involving themselves in human affairs where they would fall for mortals too. Zeus was particularly known for his desire of mortal women, much to his wife Hera's displeasure. The love of the gods can also translate into love for family, as seen by Demeter's love for her daughter Persephone which is just as fierce as Hades' love; and in Helios' desire for acceptance by his son which ultimately leaves him grief-stricken.

# Eros and Psyche

**ONCE THERE WAS** a king and a queen with three lovely daughters. The youngest daughter, Psyche, was so beautiful, so fair of face that she was revered throughout the land, and the subjects of her father reached out to touch her as she passed. No suitors dared to cross her doorstep, so highly was she worshiped. Psyche was deeply lonely.

Her beauty became legend, far and wide, and it was not long before word of it reached the ears of Aphrodite, the epitome of all beauty, the goddess of love herself. Tales of the young princess enraged the jealous goddess, and she made plans to dispose of her. Aphrodite arranged for Psyche's father to present Psyche as a sacrifice, in order to prevent his kingdom being devoured by a monster, and this he grudgingly did, placing her on a mountaintop, and bidding her a tearful farewell.

Eros, the errant son of Aphrodite, was sent to murder Psyche but he too was entranced by her gentle ways, and implored Zephyr, the West Wind, to lift her and place her down far from the hillside, in a lush and verdant valley. When Psyche opened her eyes, she found herself in front of a sumptuous palace unlike any she had seen before. She called out, and although there was no response, quiet voices simmered just beyond her hearing, comforting her, soothing her, setting her at ease. She stretched and thought briefly of food, at which a platter of succulent morsels was laid, as if by magic, at her disposal. When she grew tired, a soft bed was presented, and she slipped dreamlessly into sleep.

Psyche woke in the night. A presence had stirred her, but she felt no fear. A warmth pervaded the room and she closed her eyes, sinking into its musky perfume. She was joined and embraced by a body so inviting, she gave herself at once, filled by a sense of joy that overwhelmed her.

"Who are you?" she whispered, and a finger was laid firmly to her lips. She said no more, spending the night in tender love. When she woke, she felt gilded, but her bed was empty.

And so the days passed, with Psyche growing ever more peaceful, ever happier. She had clothes and jewels which miraculously appeared – her

every comfort was seen to. And the only hole in her happiness was loneliness, for apart from the moonlit visits from her phantom husband, she was entirely alone. She'd tried to learn more about this man who held her each night in passionate embrace, but he'd told her that his identity must remain secret, or their alliance would be no more. She agreed to his wishes because she loved him, because he filled her with a sense of belonging that she had never before experienced.

One day, however, her peaceful idyll was interrupted by the cries of her two sisters. Concerned about her disappearance, they'd spent many weeks searching the hills, and now they stood just beyond the bend of the valley. Shrieking with delight, Psyche raced up the mountain, and drew them back into her new home. And as she toured her sisters around her exquisite palace, she failed to notice their growing silence, their churlish looks. Her sisters were sickened with envy, and they teased their younger sister about her ghostly lover.

"No," she protested, "he was real." She felt him, explored him each night. Held him warm in her arms.

But her sisters taunted and teased until Psyche agreed to seek out his identity. That night, when he came to her once again, she broke her word for the first time, leaning across him to light the oil lamp. As she moved, a drop of the hot liquid fell onto the snow white skin of her lover, and his face was revealed. He was none other than the most beautiful of the gods, Eros, son of Aphrodite. But burned, and bewildered, he rose from her bed and disappeared from her forever.

Psyche's torment was so deep that she tried to take her own life. Eros, still deeply in love with his wife, but now invisible to her, saved her on each occasion, caring for her as she travelled across the kingdom in search of him. He longed to touch her, but the wrath of his mother was more than he could bear. He longed to speak to her, but could use only the trees, the winds, the creatures of the forest, to deliver his words.

Searching far and wide for Eros, Psyche came, by and by, to the home of Aphrodite. Poisoned by her jealousy, Aphrodite resolved to dispose of the young princess, knowing not of her son's attachment, caring only that Psyche was more beautiful than she, and that Psyche had eluded her careful plot to send her to her death. She set the young princess impossible tasks, determined to punish her further.

The first task was to pluck the golden wool from a flock of bloodthirsty sheep. As Psyche stood by the edge of their paddock, she heard the quiet song of the reeds in the wind. As she listened, their words became clear. She was not to pluck the wool from their backs. There, on the gorsebushes which lined their field, was the wool that had been brushed from their hides each time they passed. She crept over and filled her basket. Gleefully she returned to Aphrodite, basket held high, but her mistress' sour expression greeted her, and all hope of freedom vanished.

The goddess sent her out once again, this time to fetch water from the stream which flowed to the Styx, the river of the Underworld. As she neared its banks, Psyche grew frightened. The stream itself cut through a deep gorge, and all her efforts to reach its waters failed. Furthermore, as she caught a glimpse of its shimmering blackness, she became aware of the guard of dragons, who patrolled its shores, boiling the seething waters with their fiery breath. She sank down in despair, her bottle falling to her side.

Suddenly it was snatched up, and into the air, clutched in the grasp of Zeus' Royal Eagle. The winds had told him of Psyche's plight, and enchanted by her loveliness, he vowed to help her. Smoothly he dodged the dragons, filling the flask and returning it to her waiting arms.

Aphrodite was ill pleased by this success. She had imagined Psyche long dead by now, and set all her powers of determination to plot the third task. Psyche was to descend to the Afterworld, and beg Persephone for some of her beauty, which should be returned to Aphrodite. Once again Psyche tried to take her own life, deep in desolation and longing for Eros, and frustrated by the seemingly impossible tasks before her. But yet again, she was plucked from death by Eros, and through his powers realized the way to achieve her task. The tower from which she had attempted to leap confirmed the instructions.

Psyche was to follow the path nearby, which would take her to the Afterworld. She was to take several things along – barley cakes and honey cakes for Cerberus, the three-headed dog who guarded the entry and two coins to pay Charon, the ferryman. She was to ignore the messages of her own kind heart and refuse help to anyone who sought her assistance along the way.

Psyche set off, the words ringing in her ears. As she journeyed she was met by hapless travellers who called out for her help. At every turn lay another trap set by Aphrodite, who was determined for Psyche to remain in the Afterworld once and for all. But Psyche too had determination, fed by love for Eros, to whom she longed to return. She made her way past the pitfalls set out for her, and on to Persephone, who presented her with a box.

As she returned once more to the land of the living, she was struck by curiosity, and opened the box. The box seemed empty. But as she struggled to close it, she felt an overwhelming sleep flower around her, kissing shut her eyes, and drawing from her lungs her final breath. Death clung to the maiden, embracing her lifelessness, waiting for its usurpation to be complete.

Ever vigilant, Eros flew down, brushing the sleep of death from her eyes and placing it back in the box. And so Psyche was revived, fresh and invigorated, and glowing with new life. She returned to Aphrodite, and handed over the deadly box. She waited with anticipation. Surely Aphrodite was finished with her now.

But the goddess had a final task in store for Psyche, and led her to a large shed, full of various grains. Here lay oats, and black beans, millet, lentils, vetch and poppyseeds, wheat and rye, mixed together in an overwhelming pile. Psyche was to sort it, said Aphrodite firmly. And then she could be free.

Psyche crouched down and gingerly picked at the pile. Tears welled in her eyes and she felt the beginnings of despair touching again at her heart. As the first glistening tear fell, a tiny voice woke her from her sorrow. An ant, enchanted by the lovely princess, had moved to her side. He could help, he said, and so it was that hundreds of ants marched to the pile, and within just one hour the pile was sorted.

Aphrodite was enraged, but she was also wise enough to know that Psyche was not going to succumb to her plots. She set her free, and Psyche set off once more in her search for Eros.

Now Eros had been deeply disillusioned by his mother’s antics. Her jealousy had sparked in him a rebellion such as he’d never felt before, and with a revelatory burst, he flew at once to Olympus and begged Zeus to offer his advice.

Zeus was the King of gods for many reasons. Throughout his reign, many such sensitive matters were put before him, and his awesome wisdom and sense of justice had always prevailed. On this day, Eros was not disappointed. Zeus examined the goodness of Psyche, her dedication and her exquisite charms. He agreed to allow her marriage to Eros, he agreed to make her immortal. And in return Eros must become reconciled to his mother, and they must share the deep respect of family.

And so it was that Psyche became a daughter to Aphrodite, and entered a union with Eros. She returned once again to her palace in the valley, to a happiness that was enriched by the goodness in her heart and which was, as a result of her tribulations, now complete.

# The Rape of Persephone

**PERSEPHONE WAS** the daughter of Zeus and Demeter, a virgin of such remarkable beauty that she was kept hidden from the eyes of wishful suitors for all of her life. She spent her days idyllically, gathering fragrant flowers in the fields which spread as far as the eye could see, and dancing with the wood folk, who doted on the young maiden. Demeter was goddess of the earth, and Persephone whiled away the long summery hours helping her mother to gather seeds, to pollinate, and to sow the fertile earth. She was shielded from the outside world by her doting parents, kept carefully away from the dangers that could befall so fair a creature. They lived in the Vale of Enna, where Persephone blossomed like the flowers which surrounded her sanctuary.

One warm, sun-kissed evening, Persephone lay back in the long grasses by the idle stream which trickled through the paddock at the end of the garden. Bees hummed above the lapping waters, butterflies glided and came to rest beside the serene young woman. An eager toad lapped at the darting dragonflies. Persephone's beauty was accentuated by lush green grass, and by the expression of placid contentment which embraced her exquisite features.

It was no wonder then, that the passionate Hades, king of the Underworld, should stop in his tracks when he spied this graceful vision, should draw back the anarchic horses which lunged and tugged at his fiery chariot. He drew a deep breath. He must have her.

Now Hades and Zeus were brothers, and Hades thought nothing of approaching him to ask for Persephone's hand in marriage. Zeus knew that his daughter would be well cared for by Hades, but he felt saddened by the thought of losing her to the world from which no mortal could return. He wavered, reluctant to displease his brother, but more apprehensive still of the wrath of Demeter, who would never allow such a match to take place. Zeus announced that he could not offer his permission, but neither would he deny it, and encouraged by this response, Hades returned to the peaceful spot where Persephone lay and seized her. A great chasm opened

in the earth, and holding Persephone under an arm, Hades and his horses plunged into the dark world beneath.

It was many hours before Demeter realized that Persephone had vanished, and many days before she could come to terms with her loss. She shunned the attentions of Zeus, refused to attend the council of the gods. She dressed herself in the robes of a beggarwoman, and in this disguise, prepared to roam the realm, in search of her missing daughter. The earth grew bare as Demeter ceased to tend it; fruit withered on the vine, plenteous fields grew fallow, the warm western winds ceased to blow. The land grew cold and barren.

Demeter's travels took her across many lands. At each, she stopped, searched, and begged for information. At each she was turned away empty-handed, often snubbed and ill-treated. She grew colder, and famine spread across the earth. At last she came to the land of Eleusis, the kingdom of Celeus and his wife Metaneira. There Demeter, in her disguise, was welcomed and taken in by Queen Metaneira, who instinctively trusted the beggarwoman and asked her to act as nurse to her baby son, the Prince Demaphoon.

Demeter was weakened by her journey, and welcomed the respite. She fell in love with the young prince, and poured out her longing for her daughter in his care. She grew more content, bathing the infant in nectar and holding him daily above the fire in order to burn away his mortality. The greatest gift she could offer him was immortality, and she poured her supreme powers into the process, protecting the child from the flames so that he remained unharmed.

One day, Metaneira paid an unexpected visit to the nursery, and chanced to see this extraordinary sight. She flew into a panic, and the startled Demeter dropped the child in to the fire, where he was burned to death. At once Demeter took on her godly form, and chastised the Queen for causing the death of the child they both loved so deeply. The people of Eleusis paid tribute to the god in their midst, and in return she set up a temple, and showed them how to plant and sow seeds in the arid earth. She blessed them, and as their kindness was repaid by an end to their years of famine, so came the news she had long awaited.

A stranger came to her in her temple one night, as she prepared to retire. He'd been tending his flocks, he said, and he'd seen the ground open up to

greet a flaming chariot led by a team of black horses. In the carriage was a screaming girl who'd thrust something into the startled herder's hands, just before the earth closed upon her. He held it out to her now. It was Persephone's girdle.

The wretched Demeter knew at once what had befallen her beloved precious daughter. She returned in haste to Olympus, where she confronted Zeus. And so it was decided that Persephone should be allowed to return to her mother. He sent word to Hades, who reluctantly agreed to part from his young bride. As Persephone prepared to leave, he shyly offered her a pomegranate to eat on the journey, a token of his love, his esteem, he said. Persephone was charmed by the gesture, and breaking the fast she had undertaken while trapped in the Underworld, she nibbled at several seeds.

At once darkness fell upon her. Her mother stood just past the gates to the Underworld, but she was unable to reach her. For any mortal who eats or drinks in the land of Hades has no choice but to remain there forever. A chasm opened between mother and child, one which neither could pass.

But Zeus, ashamed by his part in the matter, and deeply concerned by Demeter's neglect of the land, which refused to flower or bear fruit, stepped in. It was agreed that Persephone would become reunited with her mother, and make her home again on earth. But for three months each year, one month for every seed of the pomegranate she had eaten, she must return to the Underworld, and become Hades' queen.

Their reunion was warmed by the sun, which shone for the first time on the cold land. Birds poked their heads from knotted branches, buds and then leaves thrust their way through the hardened earth. Spring had arrived in all her fecund splendour.

But for the three months each year in which Persephone returns to Hades, Demeter throws her cloak across the earth, bringing sterility and darkness until Persephone breathes once more in the land of the living, bringing Spring.

# Zeus’ Affairs

**IN ADDITION** to the seven immortal wives of Zeus, he was also allied to a number of mortal maidens whom he visited under various disguises, as it was supposed that if he revealed himself in his true form as king of heaven the splendour of his glory would cause instant destruction to mortals. The mortal consorts of Zeus have been such a favourite theme with poets, painters, and sculptors, that it is necessary to give some account of their individual history. Those best known are Antiope, Leda, Europa, Callisto, Alcmene, Semele, Io, and Danae. Zeus appeared to Danae under the form of a shower of gold, and more of her story is told under the myth of Perseus.

Antiope, to whom Zeus appeared under the form of a satyr, was the daughter of Nicteus, king of Thebes. To escape the anger of her father she fled to Sicyon, where king Epopeus, enraptured with her wonderful beauty, made her his wife without asking her father’s consent. This so enraged Nicteus that he declared war against Epopeus, in order to compel him to restore Antiope. At his death, which took place before he could succeed in his purpose, Nicteus left his kingdom to his brother Lycus, commanding him, at the same time, to carry on the war, and execute his vengeance. Lycus invaded Sicyon, defeated and killed Epopeus, and brought back

Antiope as a prisoner. On the way to Thebes she gave birth to her twin sons, Amphion and Zethus, who, by the orders of Lycus, were at once exposed on Mount Cithaeron, and would have perished but for the kindness of a shepherd, who took pity on them and preserved their lives. Antiope was, for many years, held captive by her uncle Lycus, and compelled to suffer the utmost cruelty at the hands of his wife Dirce. But one day her bonds were miraculously loosened, and she flew for shelter and protection to the humble dwelling of her sons on Mount Cithaeron. During the long period of their mother’s captivity the babes had grown into sturdy youths, and, as they listened angrily to the story of her wrongs, they became all impatience to avenge them. Setting off at once to Thebes they succeeded in possessing themselves of the town, and after slaying the

cruel Lycus they bound Dirce by the hair to the horns of a wild bull, which dragged her hither and thither until she expired. Her mangled body was cast into the fount near Thebes, which still bears her name. Amphion became king of Thebes in his uncle's stead. He was a friend of the Muses, and devoted to music and poetry. His brother, Zethus, was famous for his skill in archery, and was passionately fond of the chase. It is said that when Amphion wished to enclose the town of Thebes with walls and towers, he had but to play a sweet melody on the lyre, given to him by Hermes, and the huge stones began to move, and obediently fitted themselves together.

Leda, whose affections Zeus won under the form of a swan, was the daughter of Thestius, king of Aetolia. Her twin-sons, Castor and Polydeuces, were renowned for their tender attachment to each other. They were also famous for their physical accomplishments, Castor being the most expert charioteer of his day, and Polydeuces the first of pugilists. Their names appear both among the hunters of the Calydonian boar-hunt and the heroes of the Argonautic expedition. The brothers became attached to the daughters of Leucippus, prince of the Messenians, who had been betrothed by their father to Idas and Lynceus, sons of Aphareus. Having persuaded Leucippus to break his promise, the twins carried off the maidens as their brides. Idas and Lynceus, naturally furious at this proceeding, challenged the Dioscuri to mortal combat, in which Castor perished by the hand of Idas, and Lynceus by that of Polydeuces. Zeus wished to confer the gift of immortality upon Polydeuces, but he refused to accept it unless allowed to share it with Castor. Zeus gave the desired permission, and the faithful brothers were both allowed to live, but only on alternate days. The Dioscuri received divine honours throughout Greece, and were worshipped with special reverence at Sparta.

Europa was the beautiful daughter of Agenor, king of Phoenicia. She was one day gathering flowers with her companions in a meadow near the sea-shore, when Zeus, charmed with her great beauty, and wishing to win her love, transformed himself into a beautiful white bull, and trotted quietly up to the princess, so as not to alarm her. Surprised at the gentleness of the animal, and admiring its beauty, as it lay placidly on the grass, she caressed it, crowned it with flowers, and, at last, playfully seated herself on its back. Hardly had she done so than the disguised god bounded away

with his lovely burden, and swam across the sea with her to the island of Crete.

Europa was the mother of Minos, Aeacus, and Rhadamanthus. Minos, who became king of Crete, was celebrated for his justice and moderation, and after death he was created one of the judges of the lower world, which office he held in conjunction with his brothers.

Callisto, the daughter of Lycaon, king of Arcadia, was a huntress in the train of Artemis, devoted to the pleasures of the chase, who had made a vow never to marry; but Zeus, under the form of the huntress-goddess, succeeded in obtaining her affections. Hera, being extremely jealous of her, changed her into a bear, and caused Artemis (who failed to recognize her attendant under this form) to hunt her in the chase, and put an end to her existence. After her death she was placed by Zeus among the stars as a constellation, under the name of Arctos, or the bear.

Alcmene, the daughter of Electryon, king of Mycenae, was betrothed to her cousin Amphytrion; but, during his absence on a perilous undertaking, Zeus assumed his form, and obtained her affections. Heracles (whose world-renowned exploits will be related among the legends) was the son of Alcmene and Zeus.

Semele, a beautiful princess, the daughter of Cadmus, king of Phoenicia, was greatly beloved by Zeus. Like the unfortunate Callisto, she was hated by Hera with jealous malignity, and the haughty queen of heaven determined to effect her destruction. Disguising herself, therefore, as Beroe, Semele’s faithful old nurse, she artfully persuaded her to insist upon Zeus visiting her, as he appeared to Hera, in all his power and glory, well knowing that this would cause her instant death. Semele, suspecting no treachery, followed the advice of her supposed nurse; and the next time Zeus came to her, she earnestly entreated him to grant the favour she was about to ask. Zeus swore by the Styx (which was to the gods an irrevocable oath) to accede to her request whatsoever it might be. Semele, therefore, secure of gaining her petition, begged of Zeus to appear to her in all the glory of his divine power and majesty. As he had sworn to grant whatever she asked of him, he was compelled to comply with her wish; he therefore revealed himself as the mighty lord of the universe, accompanied by thunder and lightning, and she was instantly consumed in the flames.

Io, daughter of Inachus, king of Argos, was a priestess of Hera. She was very beautiful, and Zeus, who was much attached to her, transformed her into a white cow, in order to defeat the jealous intrigues of Hera, who, however, was not to be deceived. Aware of the stratagem, she contrived to obtain the animal from Zeus, and placed her under the watchful care of a man called Argus-Panoptes, who fastened her to an olive-tree in the grove of Hera. He had a hundred eyes, of which, when asleep, he never closed more than two at a time; being thus always on the watch, Hera found him extremely useful in keeping guard over Io. Hermes, however, by the command of Zeus, succeeded in putting all his eyes to sleep with the sound of his magic lyre, and then, taking advantage of his helpless condition, slew him. The story goes, that in commemoration of the services which Argus had rendered her, Hera placed his eyes on the tail of a peacock, as a lasting memorial of her gratitude. Ever fertile in resource, Hera now sent a gadfly to worry and torment the unfortunate Io incessantly, and she wandered all over the world in hopes of escaping from her tormentor. At length she reached Egypt, where she found rest and freedom from the persecutions of her enemy. On the banks of the Nile she resumed her original form and gave birth to a son called Epaphus, who afterwards became king of Egypt, and built the famous city of Memphis.

# The Loves of Helios

**HELIOS IS SAID** to have loved Clytie, a daughter of Oceanus, who ardently returned his affection; but in the course of time the fickle sun-god transferred his devotion to Leucothea, the daughter of Orchamus, king of the eastern countries, which so angered the forsaken Clytie that she informed Orchamus of his daughter's attachment, and he punished her by inhumanly burying her alive. Helios, overcome with grief, endeavoured, by every means in his power, to recall her to life. At last, finding all his efforts unavailing, he sprinkled her grave with heavenly nectar, and immediately there sprang forth from the spot a shoot of frankincense, which spread around its aromatic perfume.

The jealous Clytie gained nothing by her cruel conduct, for the sun-god came to her no more. Inconsolable at his loss, she threw herself upon the ground, and refused all sustenance. For nine long days she turned her face towards the glorious god of day, as he moved along the heavens, till at length her limbs became rooted in the ground, and she was transformed into a flower, which ever turns towards the sun.

Helios married Perse, daughter of Oceanus, and their children were, Aeetes, king of Colchis (celebrated in the legend of the Argonauts as the possessor of the Golden Fleece), and Circe, the renowned sorceress.

Helios had another son named Phaethon, whose mother was Clymene, one of the Oceanides. The youth was very beautiful, and a great favourite with Aphrodite, who intrusted him with the care of one of her temples, which flattering proof of her regard caused him to become vain and presumptuous. His friend Epaphus, son of Zeus and Io, endeavoured to check his youthful vanity by pretending to disbelieve his assertion that the sun-god was his father. Phaethon, full of resentment, and eager to be able to refute the calumny, hastened to his mother Clymene, and besought her to tell him whether Helios was really his father. Moved by his entreaties, and at the same time angry at the reproach of Epaphus, Clymene pointed to the glorious sun, then shining down upon them, and assured her son that in that bright orb he beheld the author of his being, adding that if he had

still any doubt, he might visit the radiant dwelling of the great god of light and inquire for himself. Overjoyed at his mother's reassuring words, and following the directions she gave him, Phaethon quickly wended his way to his father's palace.

As he entered the palace of the sun-god the dazzling rays almost blinded him, and prevented him from approaching the throne on which his father was seated, surrounded by the Hours, Days, Months, Years, and Seasons. Helios, who with his all-seeing eye had watched him from afar, removed his crown of glittering rays, and bade him not to be afraid, but to draw near to his father. Encouraged by this kind reception, Phaethon entreated him to bestow upon him such a proof of his love, that all the world might be convinced that he was indeed his son; whereupon Helios desired him to ask any favour he pleased, and swore by the Styx that it should be granted. The impetuous youth immediately requested permission to drive the chariot of the sun for one whole day. His father listened horror-struck to this presumptuous demand, and by representing the many dangers which would beset his path, endeavoured to dissuade him from so perilous an undertaking; but his son, deaf to all advice, pressed his point with such pertinacity, that Helios was reluctantly compelled to lead him to the chariot. Phaethon paused for a moment to admire the beauty of the glittering equipage, the gift of the god of fire, who had formed it of gold, and ornamented it with precious stones, which reflected the rays of the sun. And now Helios, seeing his sister, the Dawn, opening her doors in the rosy east, ordered the Hours to yoke the horses. The goddesses speedily obeyed the command, and the father then anointed the face of his son with a sacred balm, to enable him to endure the burning flames which issued from the nostrils of the steeds, and sorrowfully placing his crown of rays upon his head, desired him to ascend the chariot.

The eager youth joyfully took his place and grasped the coveted reins, but no sooner did the fiery coursers of the sun feel the inexperienced hand which attempted to guide them, than they became restive and unmanageable. Wildly they rushed out of their accustomed track, now soaring so high as to threaten the heavens with destruction, now descending so low as nearly to set the earth on fire. At last the unfortunate charioteer, blinded with the glare, and terrified at the awful devastation he had caused, dropped the reins from his trembling hands. Mountains and

forests were in flames, rivers and streams were dried up, and a general conflagration was imminent. The scorched earth now called on Zeus for help, who hurled his thunderbolt at Phaethon, and with a flash of lightning brought the fiery steeds to a standstill. The lifeless body of the youth fell headlong into the river Eridanus, where it was received and buried by the nymphs of the stream. His sisters mourned so long for him that they were transformed by Zeus into poplars, and the tears they shed, falling into the waters, became drops of clear, transparent amber. Cycnus, the faithful friend of the unhappy Phaethon, felt such overwhelming grief at his terrible fate, that he pined and wasted away. The gods, moved with compassion, transformed him into a swan, which for ever brooded over the fatal spot where the waters had closed over the head of his unfortunate friend.

The chief seat of the worship of Helios was the island of Rhodes, which according to the following myth was his especial territory. At the time of the Titanomachia, when the gods were dividing the world by lot, Helios happened to be absent, and consequently received no share. He, therefore, complained to Zeus, who proposed to have a new allotment, but this Helios would not allow, saying, that as he pursued his daily journey, his penetrating eye had beheld a lovely, fertile island lying beneath the waves of the ocean, and that if the immortals would swear to give him the undisturbed possession of this spot, he would be content to accept it as his share of the universe. The gods took the oath, whereupon the island of Rhodes immediately raised itself above the surface of the waters.

# Eos and Tithonus

**EOS, THE DAWN**, like her brother Helios, whose advent she always announced, was also deified by the early Greeks. She too had her own chariot, which she drove across the vast horizon both morning and night, before and after the sun-god. Hence she is not merely the personification of the rosy morn, but also of twilight, for which reason her palace is placed in the west, on the island Aeaea. The abode of Eos is a magnificent structure, surrounded by flowery meads and velvety lawns, where nymphs and other immortal beings, wind in and out in the mazy figures of the dance, whilst the music of a sweetly-tuned melody accompanies their graceful, gliding movements.

Eos is described by the poets as a beautiful maiden with rosy arms and fingers, and large wings, whose plumage is of an ever-changing hue; she bears a star on her forehead, and a torch in her hand. Wrapping round her the rich folds of her violet-tinged mantle, she leaves her couch before the break of day, and herself yokes her two horses, Lampetus and Phaethon, to her glorious chariot. She then hastens with active cheerfulness to open the gates of heaven, in order to herald the approach of her brother, the god of day, whilst the tender plants and flowers, revived by the morning dew, lift their heads to welcome her as she passes.

Eos first married the Titan Astraeus, and their children were Heosphorus (Hesperus), the evening star, and the winds. She afterwards became united to Tithonus, son of Laomedon, king of Troy, who had won her affection by his unrivalled beauty; and Eos, unhappy at the thought of their being ever separated by death, obtained for him from Zeus the gift of immortality, forgetting, however, to add to it that of eternal youth. The consequence was that when, in the course of time, Tithonus grew old and decrepid, and lost all the beauty which had won her admiration, Eos became disgusted with his infirmities, and at last shut him up in a chamber, where soon little else was left of him but his voice, which had now sunk into a weak, feeble quaver. According to some of the later poets, he became so weary of his cheerless and miserable existence, that he entreated to be allowed to die.

This was, however, impossible; but Eos, pitying his unhappy condition, exerted her divine power, and changed him into a grasshopper, which is, as it were, all voice, and whose monotonous, ceaseless chirpings may not inaptly be compared to the meaningless babble of extreme old age.

# The Loves of Apollo

**HIS FIRST LOVE** was Daphne (daughter of Peneus, the river-god), who was so averse to marriage that she entreated her father to allow her to lead a life of celibacy, and devote herself to the chase, which she loved to the exclusion of all other pursuits. But one day, soon after his victory over the Python, Apollo happened to see Eros bending his bow, and proud of his own superior strength and skill, he laughed at the efforts of the little archer, saying that such a weapon was more suited to the one who had just killed the terrible serpent. Eros angrily replied that his arrow should pierce the heart of the mocker himself, and flying off to the summit of Mount Parnassus, he drew from his quiver two darts of different workmanship – one of gold, which had the effect of inspiring love; the other of lead, which created aversion. Taking aim at Apollo, he pierced his breast with the golden shaft, whilst the leaden one he discharged into the bosom of the beautiful Daphne. The son of Leto instantly felt the most ardent affection for the nymph, who, on her part, evinced the greatest dislike towards her divine lover, and, at his approach, fled from him like a hunted deer. He called upon her in the most endearing accents to stay, but she still sped on, until at length, becoming faint with fatigue, and fearing that she was about to succumb, she called upon the gods to come to her aid. Hardly had she uttered her prayer before a heavy torpor seized her limbs, and just as Apollo threw out his arms to embrace her, she became transformed into a laurel-bush. He sorrowfully crowned his head with its leaves, and declared, that in memory of his love, it should henceforth remain evergreen, and be held sacred to him.

He next sought the love of Marpessa, the daughter of Evenus; but though her father approved his suit, the maiden preferred a youth named Idas, who contrived to carry her off in a winged chariot which he had procured from Poseidon. Apollo pursued the fugitives, whom he quickly overtook, and forcibly seizing the bride, refused to resign her. Zeus then interfered, and declared that Marpessa herself must decide which of her lovers should claim her as his wife. After due reflection she accepted Idas as her

husband, judiciously concluding that although the attractions of the divine Apollo were superior to those of her lover, it would be wiser to unite herself to a mortal, who, growing old with herself, would be less likely to forsake her, when advancing years should rob her of her charms.

Cassandra, daughter of Priam, king of Troy, was another object of the love of Apollo. She feigned to return his affection, and promised to marry him, provided he would confer upon her the gift of prophecy; but having received the boon she desired, the treacherous maiden refused to comply with the conditions upon which it had been granted. Incensed at her breach of faith, Apollo, unable to recall the gift he had bestowed, rendered it useless by causing her predictions to fail in obtaining credence. Cassandra became famous in history for her prophetic powers, but her prophecies were never believed. For instance, she warned her brother Paris that if he brought back a wife from Greece he would cause the destruction of his father's house and kingdom; she also warned the Trojans not to admit the wooden horse within the walls of the city, and foretold to Agamemnon all the disasters which afterwards befell him.

Apollo afterwards married Coronis, a nymph of Larissa, and thought himself happy in the possession of her faithful love; but once more he was doomed to disappointment, for one day his favourite bird, the crow, flew to him with the intelligence that his wife had transferred her affections to a youth of Haemonia. Apollo, burning with rage, instantly destroyed her with one of his death-bringing darts. Too late he repented of his rashness, for she had been tenderly beloved by him, and he would fain have recalled her to life; but, although he exerted all his healing powers, his efforts were in vain. He punished the crow for its garrulity by changing the colour of its plumage from pure white to intense black, and forbade it to fly any longer among the other birds.

Coronis left an infant son named Asclepius, who afterwards became god of medicine. His powers were so extraordinary that he could not only cure the sick, but could even restore the dead to life. At last Hades complained to Zeus that the number of shades conducted to his dominions was daily decreasing, and the great ruler of Olympus, fearing that mankind, thus protected against sickness and death, would be able to defy the gods themselves, killed Asclepius with one of his thunderbolts. The loss of his highly gifted son so exasperated Apollo that, being unable to vent his

anger on Zeus, he destroyed the Cyclops, who had forged the fatal thunderbolts. For this offence, Apollo would have been banished by Zeus to Tartarus, but at the earnest intercession of Leto he partially relented, and contented himself with depriving him of all power and dignity, and imposing on him a temporary servitude in the house of Admetus, king of Thessaly. Apollo faithfully served his royal master for nine years in the humble capacity of a shepherd, and was treated by him with every kindness and consideration. During the period of his service the king sought the hand of Alcestis, the beautiful daughter of Pelias, son of Poseidon; but her father declared that he would only resign her to the suitor who should succeed in yoking a lion and a wild boar to his chariot. By the aid of his divine herdsman, Admetus accomplished this difficult task, and gained his bride. Nor was this the only favour which the king received from the exiled god, for Apollo obtained from the Fates the gift of immortality for his benefactor, on condition that when his last hour approached, some member of his own family should be willing to die in his stead. When the fatal hour arrived, and Admetus felt that he was at the point of death, he implored his aged parents to yield to him their few remaining days. But ‘life is sweet’ even to old age, and they both refused to make the sacrifice demanded of them. Alcestis, however, who had secretly devoted herself to death for her husband, was seized with a mortal sickness, which kept pace with his rapid recovery. The devoted wife breathed her last in the arms of Admetus, and he had just consigned her to the tomb, when Heracles chanced to come to the palace. Admetus held the rites of hospitality so sacred, that he at first kept silence with regard to his great bereavement; but as soon as his friend heard what had occurred, he bravely descended into the tomb, and when death came to claim his prey, he exerted his marvellous strength, and held him in his arms, until he promised to restore the beautiful and heroic queen to the bosom of her family.

Whilst pursuing the peaceful life of a shepherd, Apollo formed a strong friendship with two youths named Hyacinthus and Cyparissus, but the great favour shown to them by the god did not suffice to shield them from misfortune. The former was one day throwing the discus with Apollo, when, running too eagerly to take up the one thrown by the god, he was struck on the head with it and killed on the spot. Apollo was overcome

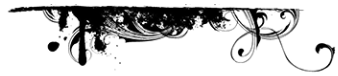
with grief at the sad end of his young favourite, but being unable to restore him to life, he changed him into the flower called after him the Hyacinth. Cyparissus had the misfortune to kill by accident one of Apollo’s favourite stags, which so preyed on his mind that he gradually pined away, and died of a broken heart. He was transformed by the god into a cypress-tree, which owes its name to this story.

# Dionysus and Ariadne

**AN INCIDENT** which occurred to Dionysus on one of his travels has been a favourite subject with the classic poets. One day, as some Tyrrhenian pirates approached the shores of Greece, they beheld Dionysus, in the form of a beautiful youth, attired in radiant garments. Thinking to secure a rich prize, they seized him, bound him, and conveyed him on board their vessel, resolved to carry him with them to Asia and there sell him as a slave. But the fetters dropped from his limbs, and the pilot, who was the first to perceive the miracle, called upon his companions to restore the youth carefully to the spot whence they had taken him, assuring them that he was a god, and that adverse winds and storms would, in all probability, result from their impious conduct. But, refusing to part with their prisoner, they set sail for the open sea. Suddenly, to the alarm of all on board, the ship stood still, masts and sails were covered with clustering vines and wreaths of ivy-leaves, streams of fragrant wine inundated the vessel, and heavenly strains of music were heard around. The terrified crew, too late repentant, crowded round the pilot for protection, and entreated him to steer for the shore. But the hour of retribution had arrived. Dionysus assumed the form of a lion, whilst beside him appeared a bear, which, with a terrific roar, rushed upon the captain and tore him in pieces; the sailors, in an agony of terror, leaped overboard, and were changed into dolphins. The discreet and pious steersman was alone permitted to escape the fate of his companions, and to him Dionysus, who had resumed his true form, addressed words of kind and affectionate encouragement, and announced his name and dignity. They now set sail, and Dionysus desired the pilot to land him at the island of Naxos, where he found the lovely Ariadne, daughter of Minos, king of Crete. She had been abandoned by Theseus on this lonely spot, and, when Dionysus now beheld her, was lying fast asleep on a rock, worn out with sorrow and weeping. Wrapt in admiration, the god stood gazing at the beautiful vision before him, and when she at length unclosed her eyes, he revealed himself to her, and, in gentle tones, sought to banish her grief. Grateful for his kind sympathy, coming as it did at a

moment when she had deemed herself forsaken and friendless, she gradually regained her former serenity, and, yielding to his entreaties, consented to become his wife.

# The Link to Roman Mythology



## Introduction

**THE ROMANS** leapt upon the pantheon of Greek gods with a vengeance, and they became even further ingrained in the consciousness of the European culture, which eventually spread northwards and across the oceans. Ovid and Virgil gave the myths new meaning and significance, imbibing them with credibility and elevating them to an art form. Virgil's *Aeneid* provides a very clear link between the tales of the Greeks, taking the Trojan hero Aeneas, mentioned in Homer's *Iliad,* and making him the hero of his own epic. He describes Aeneas' adventures after fleeing the fall of Troy until he eventually founds the site which would become Rome. With each ensuing generation, writers and readers have been inspired by the myths of the Greeks, and have adopted them as an essential part of their culture, retold, reworked and often redesigned for a new audience, but most importantly continued.

# The Birth of Roman Mythology

**FROM AROUND** 1500 bc, the Italic peoples began to settle the fertile Italian peninsula. Though mostly farmers, they were forced into almost constant conflict with marauders from the north. Rome had yet to be founded, but the idealized figure of the farmer-soldier – determined, disciplined and dutiful – had its origins here and was to inspire the Romans and the approach they took to their religion. The gods and myths of the Greeks would also have a major influence.

## Early Religion

In the eighth century bc, two new groups of people began to settle the Italian peninsula. The Greeks formed colonies (known collectively as Magna Grecia) along the southern coasts, while in central Italy a people of uncertain origin, the Etruscans, emerged. At around the same time, the Italic Latins and Sabines were living south of the Tiber in the Alban Hills around the site of what was to become the city of Rome. The family and household were the centre of religious activity for these small agricultural communities and unwittingly functioned as the crucible for what was to become the religion of Rome. They clearly, however, did not live in isolation, either from neighbouring Italic tribes or from the more advanced Etruscan and Greek civilizations to their north and south.

Scholars have argued that Roman religion was akin to an early form of animism which in time was overlaid with the more sophisticated beliefs and deities of foreign cultures. Certainly, a vast multitude of deities and spirits pervaded every aspect of life for the nascent citizens of Rome: a Numen, a manifestation of sacred power, was considered to be a part of all phenomena, activities and processes. These manifestations were often faceless, formless and sexless, and most were too vague to receive a name. However, they still required the correct performance of rituals, so that their energies might be renewed and the home and community thrive.

The distinctly Roman ethic of pietas (duty) permeated religious life. What mattered was whether or not a worshipper performed the appropriate ritual correctly; beliefs and morals were inconsequential. This emphasis

on orthopraxy (correct practice) rather than orthodoxy (correct belief) persisted in later Roman religion. Family rituals were supervised by the father of the family: the paterfamilias or household priest. The paterfamilias embodied the Genius (guardian spirit) of the family. He ensured that family members worshipped the gods and tended the household shrine known as the Lararium. Among the most ancient Italic divinities, Lares seem originally to have been either field deities or divine ancestors. The Penates, with whom the Lares were closely associated, were primarily guardians of the storeroom, who ensured families had enough to eat. Offerings were made to the Penates before each meal. Sometimes these consisted of special cakes, wine or honey and, occasionally, a blood sacrifice.

As Rome emerged as the dominant power in Italy, so Roman religion evolved to serve the political needs of the state. Mars and Jupiter, originally local agricultural deities, became the great god of war and the mighty protector of the state respectively; Venus, the goddess of vegetables and the garden, became the goddess of love and the mother of Rome's founding heroes. But, while some spirits and deities eventually acquired individual, more complex, characteristics, the Romans continued to hold dear the traditions of their farmer-soldier ancestors, and the concept of Numen, of a world suffused with sacred powers, persisted alongside.

## The Foundation of Rome

From at least the third century bc the Romans worshipped Aeneas under the name Jupiter Indiges. However, it was not until the reign of the great Emperor Augustus (31 bc–ad14) that the Roman poet Virgil transformed the story of Aeneas, and his role in founding the settlement from which Rome was to spring, into a great epic.

According to the Greeks, Aeneas fought against them in the Trojan War of the twelfth century bc. Virgil's *Aeneid* tells how, as Troy burns about him, Aeneas is commanded in a vision to flee and to found a great city overseas. Carrying his father Anchises on his back and clutching the household gods of Troy, Aeneas makes his escape with his son Ascanius Iulus at his side. However, in the confusion of leaving the burning city, his wife disappears. Though Aeneas scours the streets for her, he encounters

only her ghost, a piteous phantom, who informs him that he is to go to a land where the Tiber River flows and where a kingdom and a royal bride await him.

Aeneas embarks on his long voyage, stopping at, among other places, Thrace, Delos, Crete, Carthage and Sicily before finally reaching the mouth of the River Tiber. Latinus, the king of the region, welcomes him, but others resent the Trojans and war breaks out. The Trojans are victorious. Aeneas marries Lavinia, the daughter of Latinus, and founds Lavinium, the parent town of Alba Longa (which Ascanius comes to rule) and of Rome. Though some traditions say that Aeneas founded Rome itself, Virgil succeeds in marrying the story of Aeneas with the account, already well known, of Rome's foundation in 753 bc by Romulus, who is said to be descended from the royal line of Alba Longa.

Homer's great epics the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* date back to the eighth century bc – the same century in which the Greeks founded colonies in Italy, claiming descent from the Homeric heroes of the Trojan War. The Roman story of Aeneas developed, at least in part, as a way of opposing Greek cultural superiority and endowing Roman land and lineage with ancient tradition. 'The house of Aeneas shall rule the whole world: and their sons' sons and those who shall be born of them,' says the great god Apollo in the opening pages of the *Aeneid*.

Virgil had, during his early years, witnessed the end of the Roman Republic, a period that was riven with civil war and conflict. The *Aeneid* celebrated the arrival of peace under the Emperor Augustus and encouraged a renewed pride in Rome: "Rule the people with your sway, spare the conquered, and wear down the proud," says the ghost of Aeneas' father. Rome, hopes Virgil, will bring to the world the gifts of peace, justice, order and law.

The Augustan Age (31 bc– ad 14) was one in which the emperor sought to rekindle the traditional Roman values of duty, self-denial, obedience to the gods, responsibility and family devotion. Pious, heroic, true-hearted, dutiful and persevering, Virgil's Aeneas was the perfect hero to emulate, a prototype of the ideal Roman.

Many great Roman families, including the Julii to which the emperor Augustus as well as Julius Caesar belonged, claimed direct descent from Aeneas. The magnificent Forum of Augustus housed statues not only of

Aeneas but also of his son Ascanius and the succeeding kings of Alba Longa.

Many historians think that the Etruscans, from north of the Tiber, conquered the area around Rome in the sixth century bc and that they may have provided the impetus for the development of the early city. However, tradition has it that Rome was founded in 753 bc by a man named Romulus.

The story tells how Numitor, King of Alba Longa (a town south-east of Rome), is overthrown by his younger brother Amulius. Rhea Silvia, Numitor's only child, is forced by Amulius to become a Vestal Virgin but is seduced by the great god Mars and gives birth to twin boys. Amulius immediately orders that they be drowned in the Tiber, but the basket in which they are abandoned floats away, coming to rest at the future site of Rome. A wolf suckles the children until they are found by the shepherd Faustulus.

Romulus and Remus grow up to lead a gang of bandits. When Remus is taken prisoner and dragged before the king, Romulus hastens to his rescue, kills Amulius and restores Numitor to his throne. The young men decide to start a city of their own, at the place where they had been found by the shepherd. Through auspicium, they seek the advice of the gods as to which of them should be the founder. (Auspicium was a means of determining the will of the gods by observing the flight – and sometimes the eating habits – of birds. It was usually overseen by Augurs, men who learned secret rules which were said to enable them to discern the meaning behind the birds' behaviour.) Remus is the first to see an omen (six vultures); Romulus sees 12 vultures. A dispute breaks out as to which of them has won. Romulus kills Remus and gives his name to the new city.

## A Multitude of Gods

Augustine of Hippo described the Romans as 'men who loved a multitude of gods'. While the sheer number of Roman deities can indeed be overwhelming, early myths associated with them were remarkably undeveloped. In time, however, a more emotionally engaging mythology was to arise, due largely to the influence of the Greeks.

From their earliest days, the gods of Rome were influenced by Greek, Etruscan and Italic deities. The Romans also imported many deities

wholesale, in accordance with their policy of tolerance towards other peoples' gods. Considering, also, that many deities had numerous aspects and names, it is not surprising that the Roman priests kept lengthy catalogues of their gods.

Janus, the god of entrances, is the only deity to appear solely in Roman mythology. Another early god, Saturn, was possibly of Latin origin, while Quirinus (with whom Romulus was later identified), was worshipped by the Sabines. Jupiter, who had his origins in Etruria, formed a very early triad with Quirinus and the Italic god Mars. However, by the start of the Republic in 509 bc, he had become Jupiter Optimus Maximus, chief god of the Roman state and head of the Capitoline Triad, flanked by Juno and Minerva, also from Etruria. Another triad was composed of the grain goddess Ceres together with Liber and Libera. The temple of this group, set on the Aventine Hill, was dedicated in 494/3 bc. Ceres came from southern Italy, though she had been influenced by the Greek Demeter before becoming established in Rome.

The twins Castor and Pollux (Polydeuces to the Greeks) were the earliest Greek gods officially introduced to Rome, at the very beginning of the fifth century bc. According to legend they had helped Rome to victory in a battle against the Latins. Another early direct import from Greece was Apollo, officially admitted in 431 bc.

As Greek culture strengthened its grip, the Roman deities increasingly came to resemble the Greek gods. The Dii Consentes, corresponding to the 12 Greek Olympians, were especially honoured. Listed by the poet Ennius in the third century bc, they numbered Jupiter (Zeus), Juno (Hera), Neptune (Poseidon), Vesta (Hestia), Mars (Ares), Minerva (Athene), Venus (Aphrodite), Mercury (Hermes), Diana (Artemis), Vulcan (Hephaestus), Ceres (Demeter) and Apollo (Apollo).

It is widely assumed that the Dii Consentes were the 12 gods present at a famous lectisternium (banquet of the gods) held in 217 bc. Determined to find favour with the gods following early defeats by the Carthaginian general Hannibal, the Romans celebrated the Greek rite by setting images of their gods around a table laden with food. Although this was not the first lectisternium to be held, the Romans had, until now, insisted that the attendant gods should be invisible. The new development is seen as a huge

cultural leap, indicating that the Roman gods now shared fully in the full-blooded mythology of the Greeks.

# Adventures of Aeneas

**YOU HAVE ALREADY HEARD** how the Greeks entered the city of Troy in the dead of night, massacred the inhabitants, and set fire to the beautiful buildings which had been the king's pride and delight. Now you shall hear how Virgil relates the escape of some of the Trojans from general destruction. Below are a selection of extracts from Virgil's *Aeneid*, which totals twelve books in its entirety, written in the time of emperor Augustus to explain how his ancestor Aeneas led a group of Trojans from the ruins of the city the Greeks had destroyed to find a new home in Italy.

## The Sack of Troy

In the first book Aeneas' fleet has been blown to North Africa due to Juno's meddling. Those of the Trojans who have made it safely ashore come upon the great city of Carthage, whose queen is Dido. Aeneas' mother Venus intervenes by making Dido fall in love with Aeneas, and as the second book begins, Dido has encouraged Aeneas to describe the escape from Troy. In the following extract from Book Two the ghost of Hector appears to Aeneas to encourage him to flee from Troy, whereupon he wakes and goes out to see the destruction of his city.

*"It was the time when by the gift of God rest comes stealing first and sweetest on unhappy men. In slumber, lo! before mine eyes Hector seemed to stand by, deep in grief and shedding abundant tears; torn by the chariot, as once of old, and black with gory dust, his swoln feet pierced with the thongs. Ah me! In what guise was he! How changed from the Hector who returns from putting on Achilles' spoils, or launching the fires of Phrygia on the Grecian ships! with ragged beard and tresses clotted with blood, and all the many wounds upon him that he received around his ancestral walls. Myself too weeping I seemed to accost him ere he spoke, and utter forth mournful accents: 'O light of Dardania, O surest hope of the Trojans, what long delay is this hath held thee? From what borders comest thou, Hector our desire? With what weary eyes we see thee, after many deaths of thy kin, after divers woes of people and city! What indignity hath marred thy serene visage?*

*Or why discern I these wounds?'*

*"He replies naught, nor regards my idle questioning; but heavily drawing a heart-deep groan, 'Ah, fly, goddess-born,' he says, 'and rescue thyself from these flames. The foe holds our walls; from her high ridges Troy is toppling down. Thy country and Priam ask no more. If Troy towers might be defended by strength of hand, this hand too had been their defence. Troy commends to thee her holy things and household gods; take them to accompany thy fate; seek for them a city, which, after all the seas have known thy wanderings, thou shalt at last establish in might.' So speaks he, and carries forth in his hands from their inner shrine the chaplets and strength of Vesta, and the everlasting fire.*

*"Meanwhile the city is stirred with mingled agony; and more and more, though my father Anchises' house lay deep withdrawn and screened by trees, the noises grow clearer and the clash of armour swells. I shake myself from sleep and mount over the sloping roof, and stand there with ears attent: even as when flame catches a corn-field while south winds are furious, or the racing torrent of a mountain stream sweeps the fields, sweeps the smiling crops and labours of the oxen, and hurls the forest with it headlong; the shepherd in witless amaze hears the roar from the cliff-top.*

*"Then indeed proof is clear, and the treachery of the Grecians opens out. Already the house of Deiphobus hath crashed down in wide ruin amid the overpowering flames; already our neighbour Ucalegon is ablaze: the broad Sigean bay is lit with the fire. Cries of men and blare of trumpets rise up. Madly I seize my arms, nor is there so much purpose in arms; but my spirit is on fire to gather a band for fighting and charge for the citadel with my comrades. Fury and wrath drive me headlong, and I think how noble is death in arms.*

*"And lo! Panthus, eluding the Achaean weapons, Panthus son of Othrys, priest of Phoebus in the citadel, comes hurrying with the sacred vessels and conquered gods and his little grandchild in his hand, and runs distractedly towards my gates. 'How stands the state, O Panthus? What stronghold are we to occupy?' Scarcely had I said so, when groaning he thus returns: 'The crowning day is come, the irreversible time of the Dardanian land. No more are we a Trojan people; Ilium and*

*the great glory of the Teucrians is no more. Angry Jupiter hath cast all into the scale of Argos. The Grecians are lords of the burning town. The horse, standing high amid the city, pours forth armed men, and Sinon scatters fire, insolent in victory. Some are at the wide-flung gates, all the thousands that ever came from populous Mycenae. Others have beset the narrow streets with lowered weapons; edge and glittering point of steel stand drawn, ready for the slaughter; scarcely at the entry do the guards of the gates essay battle, and hold out in the blind fight.'*

*"Heaven's will thus declared by the son of Othrys drives me amid flames and arms, where the baleful Fury calls, and tumult of shouting rises up. Rhipeus and Epytus, most mighty in arms, join company with me; Hypanis and Dymas meet us in the moonlight and attach themselves to our side, and young Coroebus son of Mygdon. In those days it was he had come to Troy, fired with mad passion for Cassandra, and bore a son's aid to Priam and the Phrygians: hapless, that he listened not to his raving bride's counsels…. Seeing them close-ranked and daring for battle, I therewith began thus: 'Men, hearts of supreme and useless bravery, if your desire be fixed to follow one who dares the utmost; you see what is the fortune of our state: all the gods by whom this empire was upheld have gone forth, abandoning shrine and altar; your aid comes to a burning city. Let us die, and rush on their encircling weapons. The conquered have one safety, to hope for none.'*

*"So their spirit is heightened to fury. Then, like wolves ravening in a black fog, whom mad malice of hunger hath driven blindly forth, and their cubs left behind await with throats unslaked; through the weapons of the enemy we march to certain death, and hold our way straight into the town. Night's sheltering shadow flutters dark around us. Who may unfold in speech that night's horror and death-agony, or measure its woes in weeping? The ancient city falls with her long years of sovereignty; corpses lie stretched stiff all about the streets and houses and awful courts of the gods. Nor do Teucrians alone pay forfeit of their blood; once and again valour returns even in conquered hearts, and the victorious Grecians fall. Everywhere is cruel agony, everywhere terror, and the sight of death at every turn.*

*"First, with a great troop of Grecians attending him, Androgeus meets us, taking us in ignorance for an allied band, and opens on us*

*with friendly words: ‘Hasten, my men; why idly linger so late? Others plunder and harry the burning citadel; are you but now on your march from the tall ships?’ He spoke, and immediately (for no answer of any assurance was offered) knew he was fallen among the foe. In amazement, he checked foot and voice; even as one who struggling through rough briers hath trodden a snake on the ground unwarned, and suddenly shrinks fluttering back as it rises in anger and puffs its green throat out; even thus Androgeus drew away, startled at the sight. We rush in and encircle them with serried arms, and cut them down dispersedly in their ignorance of the ground and seizure of panic. Fortune speeds our first labour. And here Coroebus, flushed with success and spirit, cries: ‘O comrades, follow me where fortune points before us the path of safety, and shews her favour. Let us exchange shields, and accoutre ourselves in Grecian suits; whether craft or courage, who will ask of an enemy? the foe shall arm our hands.’*

*“Thus speaking, he next dons the plumed helmet and beautifully blazoned shield of Androgeus, and fits the Argive sword to his side. So does Rhipeus, so Dymas in like wise, and all our men in delight arm themselves one by one in the fresh spoils. We advance, mingling with the Grecians, under a protection not our own, and join many a battle with those we meet amid the blind night; many a Greek we send down to hell. Some scatter to the ships and run for the safety of the shore; some in craven fear again climb the huge horse, and hide in the belly they knew. Alas that none may trust at all to estranged gods!*

*“Lo! Cassandra, maiden daughter of Priam, was being dragged with disordered tresses from the temple and sanctuary of Minerva, straining to heaven her blazing eyes in vain; her eyes, for fetters locked her delicate hands. At this sight Coroebus burst forth infuriate, and flung himself on death amid their columns. We all follow him up, and charge with massed arms. Here first from the high temple roof we are overwhelmed with our own people’s weapons, and a most pitiful slaughter begins through the fashion of our armour and the mistaken Greek crests; then the Grecians, with angry cries at the maiden’s rescue, gather from every side and fall on us; Ajax in all his valour, and the two sons of Atreus, and the whole Dolopian army: as oft when bursting in whirlwind West and South clash with adverse blasts, and the East wind*

*exultant on the coursers of the Dawn; the forests cry, and fierce in foam Nereus with his trident stirs the seas from their lowest depth. Those too appear, whom our stratagem routed through the darkness of dim night and drove all about the town; at once they know the shields and lying weapons, and mark the alien tone on our lips.*

*"We go down, overwhelmed by numbers. First Coroebus is stretched by Peneleus' hand at the altar of the goddess armipotent; and Rhipeus falls, the one man who was most righteous and steadfast in justice among the Teucrians: the gods' ways are not as ours: Hypanis and Dymas perish, pierced by friendly hands; nor did all thy goodness, O Panthus, nor Apollo's fillet protect thy fall. O ashes of Ilium and death flames of my people! You I call to witness that in your ruin I shunned no Grecian weapon or encounter, and my hand earned my fall, had destiny been thus. We tear ourselves away, I and Iphitus and Pelias, Iphitus now stricken in age, Pelias halting too under the wound of Ulysses, called forward by the clamour to Priam's house.*

*"Here indeed the battle is fiercest, as if all the rest of the fighting were nowhere, and no slaughter but here throughout the city, so do we descry the war in full fury, the Grecians rushing on the building, and their shielded column driving up against the beleaguered threshold. Ladders cling to the walls; and hard by the doors and planted on the rungs they hold up their shields in the left hand to ward off our weapons, and with their right clutch the battlements. The Dardanians tear down turrets and the covering of the house roof against them; with these for weapons, since they see the end is come, they prepare to defend themselves even in death's extremity: and hurl down gilded beams, the stately decorations of their fathers of old. Others with drawn swords have beset the doorway below and keep it in crowded column. We renew our courage, to aid the royal dwelling, to support them with our succour, and swell the force of the conquered."*

## Dido and Aeneas

Aeneas relates how he managed to lead a group of Trojans away from their burning city and the swords of the Greeks, including his father – who dies before they arrive at Carthage – and his young son; though sadly not his wife. Thinking that Crete might be the location of their new home, the

Trojans sail there, however Aeneas receives a vision which shows him that the Italian shores and not Crete are where they should be heading. Book Four then takes us back to the present, where Aeneas is at Dido's court. Aeneas spends a year with the Carthaginian queen, until the gods remind him of his duty. To avoid Dido's tears and recriminations, he keeps his preparations for departure a complete secret, and finally sets sail whilst Dido is asleep. Dido is grief-stricken and ultimately commits suicide as seen in the following extract from Book Four.

*But the Queen – who may delude a lover? – foreknew his devices, and at once caught the presaging stir. Safety's self was fear; to her likewise had evil Rumour borne the maddening news that they equip the fleet and prepare for passage. Helpless at heart, she reels aflame with rage throughout the city, even as the startled Thyiad in her frenzied triennial orgies, when the holy vessels move forth and the cry of Bacchus re-echoes, and Cithaeron calls her with nightlong din. Thus at last she opens out upon Aeneas:*

*"And thou didst hope, traitor, to mask the crime, and slip away in silence from my land? Our love holds thee not, nor the hand thou once gavest, nor the bitter death that is left for Dido's portion? Nay, under the wintry star thou labourest on thy fleet, and hastenest to launch into the deep amid northern gales; ah, cruel! Why, were thy quest not of alien fields and unknown dwellings, did thine ancient Troy remain, should Troy be sought in voyages over tossing seas?*

*"Fliest thou from me? Me who by these tears and thine own hand beseech thee, since naught else, alas! have I kept mine own – by our union and the marriage rites preparing; if I have done thee any grace, or aught of mine hath once been sweet in thy sight, – pity our sinking house, and if there yet be room for prayers, put off this purpose of thine. For thy sake Libyan tribes and Nomad kings are hostile; my Tyrians are estranged; for thy sake, thine, is mine honour perished, and the former fame, my one title to the skies. How leavest thou me to die, O my guest? Since to this the name of husband is dwindled down. For what do I wait? Till Pygmalion overthrow his sister's city, or Gaetulian Iarbas lead me to captivity? At least if before thy flight a child of thine had been clasped in my arms, – if a tiny Aeneas were playing in my hall, whose face might yet image thine, – I would not think myself ensnared*

*and deserted utterly."*

*She ended; he by counsel of Jove held his gaze unstirred, and kept his distress hard down in his heart. At last he briefly answers:*

*"Never, O Queen, will I deny that thy goodness hath gone high as thy words can swell the reckoning; nor will my memory of Elissa be ungracious while I remember myself, and breath sways this body. Little will I say in this. I never hoped to slip away in stealthy flight; fancy not that; nor did I ever hold out the marriage torch or enter thus into alliance. Did fate allow me to guide my life by mine own government, and calm my sorrows as I would, my first duty were to the Trojan city and the dear remnant of my kindred; the high house of Priam should abide, and my hand had set up Troy towers anew for a conquered people. But now for broad Italy hath Apollo of Grynos bidden me steer, for Italy the oracles of Lycia. Here is my desire; this is my native country. If thy Phoenician eyes are stayed on Carthage towers and thy Libyan city, what wrong is it, I pray, that we Trojans find our rest on Ausonian land? We too may seek a foreign realm unforbidden. In my sleep, often as the dank shades of night veil the earth, often as the stars lift their fires, the troubled phantom of my father Anchises comes in warning and dread; my boy Ascanius, how I wrong one so dear in cheating him of an Hesperian kingdom and destined fields. Now even the gods' interpreter, sent straight from Jove – I call both to witness – hath borne down his commands through the fleet air. Myself in broad daylight I saw the deity passing within the walls, and these ears drank his utterance. Cease to madden me and thyself alike with plaints. Not of my will do I follow Italy…"*

*Long ere he ended she gazes on him askance, turning her eyes from side to side and perusing him with silent glances; then thus wrathfully speaks:*

*"No goddess was thy mother, nor Dardanus founder of thy line, traitor! But rough Caucasus bore thee on his iron crags, and Hyrcanian tigresses gave thee suck. For why do I conceal it? For what further outrage do I wait? Hath our weeping cost him a sigh, or a lowered glance? Hath he broken into tears, or had pity on his lover? Where, where shall I begin? Now neither doth Queen Juno nor our Saturnian lord regard us with righteous eyes. Nowhere is trust safe. Cast ashore*

*and destitute I welcomed him, and madly gave him place and portion in my kingdom; I found him his lost fleet and drew his crews from death.*

*"Alas, the fire of madness speeds me on. Now prophetic Apollo, now oracles of Lycia, now the very gods' interpreter sent straight from Jove through the air carries these rude commands! Truly that is work for the gods, that a care to vex their peace! I detain thee not, nor gainsay thy words: go, follow thine Italy down the wind; seek thy realm overseas. Yet midway my hope is, if righteous gods can do aught at all, thou wilt drain the cup of vengeance on the rocks, and re-echo calls on Dido's name. In murky fires I will follow far away, and when chill death hath severed body from soul, my ghost will haunt thee in every region. Wretch, thou shalt repay! I will hear; and the rumour of it shall reach me deep in the under world."*

*Even on these words she breaks off her speech unfinished, and, sick at heart, escapes out of the air and sweeps round and away out of sight, leaving him in fear and much hesitance, and with much on his mind to say. Her women catch her in their arms, and carry her swooning to her marble chamber and lay her on her bed.*

*But good Aeneas, though he would fain soothe and comfort her grief, and talk away her distress, with many a sigh, and melted in soul by his great love, yet fulfils the divine commands and returns to his fleet. Then indeed the Teucrians set to work, and haul down their tall ships all along the shore. The hulls are oiled and afloat; they carry from the woodland green boughs for oars and massy logs unhewn, in hot haste to go…. One might descry them shifting their quarters and pouring out of all the town: even as ants, mindful of winter, plunder a great heap of wheat and store it in their house; a black column advances on the plain as they carry home their spoil on a narrow track through the grass.*

*Some shove and strain with their shoulders at big grains, some marshal the ranks and chastise delay; all the path is aswarm with work. What then were thy thoughts, O Dido, as thou sawest it? What sighs didst thou utter, viewing from the fortress roof the broad beach aswarm, and seeing before thine eyes the whole sea stirred with their noisy din? Injurious Love, to what dost thou not compel mortal hearts! Again, she must needs break into tears, again essay entreaty, and bow her spirit down to love, not to leave aught untried and go to death in vain.*

*“Anna, thou seest the bustle that fills the shore. They have gathered round from every quarter; already their canvas woos the breezes, and the merry sailors have garlanded the sterns. This great pain, my sister, I shall have strength to bear, as I have had strength to foresee. Yet this one thing, Anna, for love and pity’s sake – for of thee alone was the traitor fain, to thee even his secret thoughts were confided, alone thou knewest his moods and tender fits – go, my sister, and humbly accost the haughty stranger: I did not take the Grecian oath in Aulis to root out the race of Troy; I sent no fleet against her fortresses; neither have I disentombed his father Anchises’ ashes and ghost, that he should refuse my words entrance to his stubborn ears. Whither does he run? Let him grant this grace – alas, the last! – to his lover, and await fair winds and an easy passage. No more do I pray for the old delusive marriage, nor that he give up fair Latium and abandon a kingdom. A breathing-space I ask, to give my madness rest and room, till my very fortune teach my grief submission. This last favour I implore: sister, be pitiful; grant this to me, and I will restore it in full measure when I die.”*

*So she pleaded, and so her sister carries and recarries the piteous tale of weeping. But by no weeping is he stirred, inflexible to all the words he hears. Fate withstands, and lays divine bars on unmoved mortal ears. Even as when the eddying blasts of northern Alpine winds are emulous to uproot the secular strength of a mighty oak, it wails on, and the trunk quivers and the high foliage strews the ground; the tree clings fast on the rocks, and high as her top soars into heaven, so deep strike her roots to hell; even thus is the hero buffeted with changeful perpetual accents, and distress thrills his mighty breast, while his purpose stays unstirred, and tears fall in vain.*

*Then indeed, hapless and dismayed by doom, Dido prays for death, and is weary of gazing on the arch of heaven. The more to make her fulfil her purpose and quit the light, she saw, when she laid her gifts on the altars alight with incense, awful to tell, the holy streams blacken, and the wine turn as it poured into ghastly blood. Of this sight she spoke to none – no, not to her sister.*

*Likewise there was within the house a marble temple of her ancient lord, kept of her in marvellous honour, and fastened with snowy fleeces and festal boughs. Forth of it she seemed to hear her husband’s voice*

*crying and calling when night was dim upon earth, and alone on the house-tops the screech-owl often made moan with funeral note and long-drawn sobbing cry. Therewithal many a warning of wizards of old terrifies her with appalling presage. In her sleep fierce Aeneas drives her wildly, and ever she seems being left by herself alone, ever going uncompanioned on a weary way, and seeking her Tyrians in a solitary land: even as frantic Pentheus sees the arrayed Furies and a double sun, and Thebes shows herself twofold to his eyes: or Agamemnonian Orestes, renowned in tragedy, when his mother pursues him armed with torches and dark serpents, and the Fatal Sisters crouch avenging in the doorway.*

*So when, overcome by her pangs, she caught the madness and resolved to die, she works out secretly the time and fashion, and accosts her sorrowing sister with mien hiding her design and hope calm on her brow.*

*"I have found a way, mine own – wish me joy, sisterlike – to restore him to me or release me of my love for him. Hard by the ocean limit and the set of sun is the extreme Aethiopian land, where ancient Atlas turns on his shoulders the starred burning axletree of heaven. Out of it hath been shown to me a priestess of Massylian race, warder of the temple of the Hesperides, even she who gave the dragon his food, and kept the holy boughs on the tree, sprinkling clammy honey and slumberous poppy-seed. She professes with her spells to relax the purposes of whom she will, but on others to bring passion and pain; to stay the river-waters and turn the stars backward: she calls up ghosts by night; thou shalt see earth moaning under foot and mountain-ashes descending from the hills. I take heaven, sweet, to witness, and thee, mine own darling sister, I do not willingly arm myself with the arts of magic.*

*"Do thou secretly raise a pyre in the inner court, and let them lay on it the arms that the accursed one left hanging in our chamber, and all the dress he wore, and the bridal bed where I fell. It is good to wipe out all the wretch's traces, and the priestess orders thus." So speaks she, and is silent, while pallor overruns her face. Yet Anna deems not her sister veils death behind these strange rites, and grasps not her wild purpose, nor fears aught deeper than at Sychaeus' death. So she makes ready as bidden….*

## The Underworld

Book Six of the Aeneid recounts how the Trojans make it to Cumae in Italy, where there is a famous Sibyl. She tells him of the many trials he has yet to face, but urges him to continue. Aeneas makes known his wish to visit Hades, and entreats her to serve as his guide in that perilous journey. She consents, but at the same time informs him that he must first obtain a golden twig, which grows in a dark forest. Having done so, Aeneas descends into the Underworld where he sees Dido on the way to finding his father Anchises. In this extract from Book Six Anchises points out the future heroes of Rome waiting to be born, who include amongst them Romulus and the emperor Augustus.

*But lord Anchises, deep in the green valley, was musing in earnest survey over the imprisoned souls destined to the daylight above, and haply reviewing his beloved children and all the tale of his people, them and their fates and fortunes, their works and ways. And he, when he saw Aeneas advancing to meet him over the greensward, stretched forth both hands eagerly, while tears rolled over his cheeks, and his lips parted in a cry: "Art thou come at last, and hath thy love, O child of my desire, conquered the difficult road? Is it granted, O my son, to gaze on thy face and hear and answer in familiar tones? Thus indeed I forecast in spirit, counting the days between; nor hath my care misled me. What lands, what space of seas hast thou traversed to reach me, through what surge of perils, O my son! How I dreaded the realm of Libya might work thee harm!"*

*And he: "Thy melancholy phantom, thine, O my father, came before me often and often, and drove me to steer to these portals. My fleet is anchored on the Tyrrhenian brine. Give thine hand to clasp, O my father, give it, and withdraw not from our embrace."*

*So spoke he, his face wet with abundant weeping. Thrice there did he essay to fling his arms about his neck; thrice the phantom vainly grasped fled out of his hands even as light wind, and most like to fluttering sleep.*

*Meanwhile Aeneas sees deep withdrawn in the covert of the vale a woodland and rustling forest thickets, and the river of Lethe that floats past their peaceful dwellings. Around it flitted nations and peoples*

*innumerable; even as in the meadows when in clear summer weather bees settle on the variegated flowers and stream round the snow-white lilies, all the plain is murmurous with their humming. Aeneas starts at the sudden view, and asks the reason he knows not; what are those spreading streams, or who are they whose vast train fills the banks?*

*Then lord Anchises: "Souls, for whom second bodies are destined and due, drink at the wave of the Lethean stream the heedless water of long forgetfulness. These of a truth have I long desired to tell and shew thee face to face, and number all the generation of thy children, that so thou mayest the more rejoice with me in finding Italy."*

*"O father, must we think that any souls travel hence into upper air, and return again to bodily fetters? why this their strange sad longing for the light?"*

*"I will tell," rejoins Anchises, "nor will I hold thee in suspense, my son." And he unfolds all things in order one by one.*

*"First of all, heaven and earth and the liquid fields, the shining orb of the moon and the Titanian star, doth a spirit sustain inly, and a soul shed abroad in them sways all their members and mingles in the mighty frame. Thence is the generation of man and beast, the life of winged things, and the monstrous forms that ocean breeds under his glittering floor. Those seeds have fiery force and divine birth, so far as they are not clogged by taint of the body and dulled by earthy frames and limbs ready to die. Hence is it they fear and desire, sorrow and rejoice; nor can they pierce the air while barred in the blind darkness of their prison-house. Nay, and when the last ray of life is gone, not yet, alas! does all their woe, nor do all the plagues of the body wholly leave them free; and needs must be that many a long ingrained evil should take root marvellously deep.*

*"Therefore they are schooled in punishment, and pay all the forfeit of a lifelong ill; some are hung stretched to the viewless winds; some have the taint of guilt washed out beneath the dreary deep, or burned away in fire. We suffer, each a several ghost; thereafter we are sent to the broad spaces of Elysium, some few of us to possess the happy fields; till length of days completing time's circle takes out the ingrained soilure and leaves untainted the ethereal sense and pure spiritual flame. All these before thee, when the wheel of a thousand years hath come fully round,*

*a God summons in vast train to the river of Lethe, that so they may regain in forgetfulness the slopes of upper earth, and begin to desire to return again into the body."*

*Anchises ceased, and leads his son and the Sibyl likewise amid the assembled murmurous throng, and mounts a hillock whence he might scan all the long ranks and learn their countenances as they came.*

*"Now come, the glory hereafter to follow our Dardanian progeny, the posterity to abide in our Italian people, illustrious souls and inheritors of our name to be, these will I rehearse, and instruct thee of thy destinies. He yonder, seest thou? The warrior leaning on his pointless spear, holds the nearest place allotted in our groves, and shall rise first into the air of heaven from the mingling blood of Italy, Silvius of Alban name, the child of thine age, whom late in thy length of days thy wife Lavinia shall nurture in the woodland, king and father of kings; from him in Alba the Long shall our house have dominion. He next him is Procas, glory of the Trojan race; and Capys and Numitor; and he who shall renew thy name, Silvius Aeneas, eminent alike in goodness or in arms, if ever he shall receive his kingdom in Alba. Men of men! See what strength they display, and wear the civic oak shading their brows.*

*"They shall establish Nomentum and Gabii and Fidena city, they the Collatine hill-fortress, Pometii and the Fort of Inuus, Bola and Cora: these shall be names that are now nameless lands. Nay, Romulus likewise, seed of Mavors, shall join his grandsire's company, from his mother Ilia's nurture and Assaracus' blood. Seest thou how the twin plumes straighten on his crest, and his father's own emblazonment already marks him for upper air? Behold, O son! by his augury shall Rome the renowned fill earth with her empire and heaven with her pride, and gird about seven fortresses with her single wall, prosperous mother of men; even as our lady of Berecyntus rides in her chariot turret-crowned through the Phrygian cities, glad in the gods she hath borne, clasping an hundred of her children's children, all habitants of heaven, all dwellers on the upper heights.*

*"Hither now bend thy twin-eyed gaze; behold this people, the Romans that are thine. Here is Caesar and all Iülus' posterity that shall arise under the mighty cope of heaven. Here is he, he of whose promise once and again thou hearest, Caesar Augustus, a god's son, who shall*

*again establish the ages of gold in Latium over the fields that once were Saturn's realm, and carry his empire afar to Garamant and Indian, to the land that lies beyond our stars, beyond the sun's yearlong ways, where Atlas the sky-bearer wheels on his shoulder the glittering star-spangled pole. Before his coming even now the kingdoms of the Caspian shudder at oracular answers, and the Maeotic land and the mouths of sevenfold Nile flutter in alarm. Nor indeed did Alcides traverse such spaces of earth, though he pierced the brazen-footed deer, or though he stilled the Erymanthian woodlands and made Lerna tremble at his bow: nor he who sways his team with reins of vine, Liber the conqueror, when he drives his tigers from Nysa's lofty crest. And do we yet hesitate to give valour scope in deeds, or shrink in fear from setting foot on Ausonian land?*

*"Ah, and who is he apart, marked out with sprays of olive, offering sacrifice? I know the locks and hoary chin of the king of Rome who shall establish the infant city in his laws, sent from little Cures' sterile land to the majesty of empire. To him Tullus shall next succeed, who shall break the peace of his country and stir to arms men rusted from war and armies now disused to triumphs; and hard on him over-vaunting Ancus follows, even now too elate in popular breath. Wilt thou see also the Tarquin kings, and the haughty soul of Brutus the Avenger, and the fasces regained? He shall first receive a consul's power and the merciless axes, and when his children would stir fresh war, the father, for fair freedom's sake, shall summon them to doom. Unhappy! Yet howsoever posterity shall take the deed, love of country and limitless passion for honour shall prevail.*

*"Nay, behold apart the Decii and the Drusi, Torquatus with his cruel axe, and Camillus returning with the standards. Yonder souls likewise, whom thou discernest gleaming in equal arms, at one now, while shut in Night, ah me! What mutual war, what battle-lines and bloodshed shall they arouse, so they attain the light of the living! Father-in-law descending from the Alpine barriers and the fortress of the Dweller Alone, son-in-law facing him with the embattled East. Nay, O my children, harden not your hearts to such warfare, neither turn upon her own heart the mastering might of your country; and thou, be thou first to forgive, who drawest thy descent from heaven; cast down the weapons*

*from thy hand, O blood of mine…. He shall drive his conquering chariot to the Capitoline height triumphant over Corinth, glorious in Achaean slaughter. He shall uproot Argos and Agamemnonian Mycenae, and the Aeacid's own heir, the seed of Achilles mighty in arms, avenging his ancestors in Troy and Minerva's polluted temple.*

*"Who might leave thee, lordly Cato, or thee, Cossus, to silence? Who the Gracchan family, or these two sons of the Scipios, a double thunderbolt of war, Libya's bale? And Fabricius potent in poverty, or thee, Serranus, sowing in the furrow? Whither whirl you me all breathless, O Fabii? Thou art he, the most mighty, the one man whose lingering retrieves our State. Others shall beat out the breathing bronze to softer lines, I believe it well; shall draw living lineaments from the marble; the cause shall be more eloquent on their lips; their pencil shall portray the pathways of heaven, and tell the stars in their arising: be thy charge, O Roman, to rule the nations in thine empire; this shall be thine art, to lay down the law of peace, to be merciful to the conquered and beat the haughty down."*

*Thus lord Anchises, and as they marvel, he so pursues: "Look how Marcellus the conqueror marches glorious in the splendid spoils, towering high above them all! He shall stay the Roman State, reeling beneath the invading shock, shall ride down Carthaginian and insurgent Gaul, and a third time hang up the captured armour before lord Quirinus."*

*And at this Aeneas, for he saw going by his side one excellent in beauty and glittering in arms, but his brow had little cheer, and his eyes looked down:*

*"Who, O my father, is he who thus attends him on his way? Son, or other of his children's princely race? How his comrades murmur around him! How goodly of presence he is! But dark Night flutters round his head with melancholy shade."*

*Then lord Anchises with welling tears began: "O my son, ask not of the great sorrow of thy people. Him shall fate but shew to earth, and suffer not to stay further. Too mighty, lords of heaven, did you deem the brood of Rome, had this your gift been abiding. What moaning of men shall arise from the Field of Mavors by the imperial city! What a funeral train shalt thou see, O Tiber, as thou flowest by the new-made*

*grave! Neither shall the boyhood of any of Ilian race raise his Latin forefathers' hope so high; nor shall the land of Romulus ever boast of any fosterling like this.*

*"Alas his goodness, alas his antique honour, and right hand invincible in war! None had faced him unscathed in armed shock, whether he met the foe on foot, or ran his spurs into the flanks of his foaming horse. Ah me, the pity of thee, O boy! If in any wise thou breakest the grim bar of fate, thou shalt be Marcellus. Give me lilies in full hands; let me strew bright blossoms, and these gifts at least let me lavish on my descendant's soul, and do the unavailing service."*

*Thus they wander up and down over the whole region of broad vaporous plains, and scan all the scene. And when Anchises had led his son over it, each point by each, and kindled his spirit with passion for the glories on their way, he tells him thereafter of the war he next must wage, and instructs him of the Laurentine peoples and the city of Latinus, and in what wise each task may be turned aside or borne.*

## Embassy to Evander

After a prolonged conversation with his father, Aeneas returns to his companions, and leads them to the mouth of the Tiber, whose course they follow until they reached Latium, where their wanderings cease. Latinus, king of the country, receives them hospitably, and promises the hand of his daughter Lavinia in marriage to Aeneas. Lavinia is very beautiful, and had already had many suitors, among whom Turnus, a neighbouring prince, boasted of the most exalted rank. The queen, Amata, specially favours this youth's suit; and the king would gladly have received him for a son-in-law, had he not twice been warned by the gods to reserve his daughter for a foreign prince, who he takes to mean Aeneas. Juno has not yet forgotten her hatred of the Trojan race, and conspires to meddle once more, stirring up Turnus' hostility against Aeneas and his men. In this extract from Book Eight, Aeneas seeks help from Evander, who has a settlement on the future site of Rome.

*When Turnus ran up the flag of war on the towers of Laurentum, and the trumpets blared with harsh music, when he spurred his fiery steeds and clashed his armour, straightway men's hearts are in tumult; all Latium at once flutters in banded uprisal, and her warriors rage*

*furiously. Their chiefs, Messapus, and Ufens, and Mezentius, scorner of the gods, begin to enrol forces on all sides, and dispeople the wide fields of husbandmen.*

*Venulus too is sent to the town of mighty Diomede to seek succour, to instruct him that Teucrians set foot in Latium; that Aeneas in his fleet invades them with the vanquished gods of his home, and proclaims himself the King summoned of fate; that many tribes join the Dardanian, and his name swells high in Latium. What he will rear on these foundations, what issue of battle he desires, if Fortune attend him, lies clearer to his own sight than to King Turnus or King Latinus.*

*Thus was it in Latium. And the hero of Laomedon's blood, seeing it all, tosses on a heavy surge of care, and throws his mind rapidly this way and that, and turns it on all hands in swift change of thought: even as when the quivering light of water brimming in brass, struck back from the sunlight or the moon's glittering reflection, flickers abroad over all the room, and now mounts aloft and strikes the high panelled roof. Night fell, and over all lands weary creatures were fast in deep slumber, the race of fowl and of cattle; when lord Aeneas, sick at heart of the dismal warfare, stretched him on the river bank under the cope of the cold sky, and let sleep, though late, overspread his limbs. To him the very god of the ground, the pleasant Tiber stream, seemed to raise his aged form among the poplar boughs; thin lawn veiled him with its grey covering, and shadowy reeds hid his hair. Thereon he addressed him thus, and with these words allayed his distresses:*

*"O born of the family of the gods, thou who bearest back our Trojan city from hostile hands, and keepest Troy towers in eternal life; O long looked for on Laurentine ground and Latin fields! Here is thine assured home, thine home's assured gods. Draw not thou back, nor be alarmed by menace of war. All the anger and wrath of the gods is passed away… And even now for thine assurance, that thou think not this the idle fashioning of sleep, a great sow shall be found lying under the oaks on the shore, with her new-born litter of thirty head: white she couches on the ground, and the brood about her teats is white. By this token in thirty revolving years shall Ascanius found a city, Alba of bright name. My prophecy is sure.*

*"Now hearken, and I will briefly instruct thee how thou mayest*

*unravel and overcome thy present task. An Arcadian people sprung of Pallas, following in their king Evander's company beneath his banners, have chosen a place in these coasts, and set a city on the hills, called Pallanteum after Pallas their forefather. These wage perpetual war with the Latin race; these do thou take to thy camp's alliance, and join with them in league. Myself I will lead thee by my banks and straight along my stream, that thou mayest oar thy way upward against the river. Up and arise, goddess-born, and even with the setting stars address thy prayers to Juno as is meet, and vanquish her wrath and menaces with humble vows. To me thou shalt pay a conqueror's sacrifice. I am he whom thou seest washing the banks with full flood and severing the rich tilth, glassy Tiber, best beloved by heaven of rivers. Here is my stately home; my fountain-head is among high cities.'*

*Thus spoke the River, and sank in the depth of the pool: night and sleep left Aeneas. He arises, and, looking towards the radiant sky of the sunrising, holds up water from the river in fitly-hollowed palms, and pours to heaven these accents:*

*"Nymphs, Laurentine Nymphs, from whom is the generation of rivers, and thou, O father Tiber, with thine holy flood, receive Aeneas and deign to save him out of danger. What pool soever holds thy source, who pitiest our discomforts, from whatsoever soil thou dost spring excellent in beauty, ever shall my worship, ever my gifts frequent thee, the hornèd river lord of Hesperian waters. Ah, be thou only by me, and graciously confirm thy will." So speaks he, and chooses two galleys from his fleet, and mans them with rowers, and withal equips a crew with arms.*

*And lo! Suddenly, ominous and wonderful to tell, the milk-white sow, of one colour with her white brood, is espied through the forest couched on the green brink; whom to thee, yes to thee, queenly Juno, good Aeneas offers in sacrifice, and sets with her offspring before thine altar. All that night long Tiber assuaged his swelling stream, and silently stayed his refluent wave, smoothing the surface of his waters to the fashion of still pool and quiet mere, to spare labour to the oar.*

*So they set out and speed on their way with prosperous cries; the painted fir slides along the waterway; the waves and unwonted woods marvel at their far-gleaming shields, and the gay hulls afloat on the river. They outwear a night and a day in rowing, ascend the long*

*reaches, and pass under the chequered shadows of the trees, and cut through the green woodland in the calm water. The fiery sun had climbed midway in the circle of the sky when they see afar fortress walls and scattered house roofs, where now the might of Rome hath risen high as heaven; then Evander held a slender state. Quickly they turn their prows to land and draw near the town.*

*It chanced on that day the Arcadian king paid his accustomed sacrifice to the great son of Amphitryon and all the gods in a grove before the city. With him his son Pallas, with him all the chief of his people and his poor senate were offering incense, and the blood steamed warm at their altars. When they saw the high ships, saw them glide up between the shady woodlands and rest on their silent oars, the sudden sight appals them, and all at once they rise and stop the banquet. Pallas courageously forbids them to break off the rites; snatching up a spear, he flies forward, and from a hillock cries afar: "O men, what cause hath driven you to explore these unknown ways? Or whither do you steer? What is your kin, whence your habitation? Is it peace or arms you carry hither?" Then from the lofty stern lord Aeneas thus speaks, stretching forth in his hand an olive bough of peace-bearing:*

*"Thou seest men born of Troy and arms hostile to the Latins, who have driven us to flight in insolent warfare. We seek Evander; carry this message, and tell him that chosen men of the Dardanian captains are come pleading for an armed alliance."*

*Pallas stood amazed at the august name. "Descend," he cries, "whoso thou art, and speak with my father face to face, and enter our home and hospitality." And giving him the grasp of welcome, he caught and clung to his hand. Advancing, they enter the grove and leave the river. Then Aeneas in courteous words addresses the King:*

*"Best of the Grecian race, thou whom fortune hath willed that I supplicate, holding before me boughs dressed in fillets, no fear stayed me because thou wert a Grecian chief and an Arcadian, or allied by descent to the twin sons of Atreus. Nay, mine own prowess and the sanctity of divine oracles, our ancestral kinship, and the fame of thee that is spread abroad over the earth, have allied me to thee and led me willingly on the path of fate. Dardanus, who sailed to the Teucrian land,*

*the first father and founder of the Ilian city, was born, as Greeks relate, of Electra the Atlantid; Electra's sire is ancient Atlas, whose shoulder sustains the heavenly spheres. Your father is Mercury, whom white Maia conceived and bore on the cold summit of Cyllene; but Maia, if we give any credence to report, is daughter of Atlas, that same Atlas who bears up the starry heavens; so both our families branch from a single blood.*

*"In this confidence I sent no embassy, I framed no crafty overtures; myself I have presented mine own person, and come a suppliant to thy courts. The same Daunian race pursues us and thee in merciless warfare; we once expelled, they trust nothing will withhold them from laying all Hesperia wholly beneath their yoke, and holding the seas that wash it above and below. Accept and return our friendship. We can give brave hearts in war, high souls and men approved in deeds."*

*Aeneas ended. The other ere now scanned in a long gaze the face and eyes and all the form of the speaker; then thus briefly returns:*

*"How gladly, bravest of the Teucrians, do I hail and own thee! How I recall thy father's words and the very tone and glance of great Anchises! For I remember how Priam son of Laomedon, when he sought Salamis on his way to the realm of his sister Hesione, went on to visit the cold borders of Arcadia. Then early youth clad my cheeks with bloom. I admired the Teucrian captains, admired their lord, the son of Laomedon; but Anchises moved high above them all. My heart burned with youthful passion to accost him and clasp hand in hand; I made my way to him, and led him eagerly to Pheneus' high town.*

*"Departing he gave me an adorned quiver and Lycian arrows, a scarf inwoven with gold, and a pair of golden bits that now my Pallas possesses. Therefore my hand is already joined in the alliance you seek, and soon as tomorrow's dawn rises again over earth, I will send you away rejoicing in mine aid, and supply you from my store. Meanwhile, since you are come hither in friendship, solemnise with us these yearly rites which we may not defer, and even now learn to be familiar at your comrades' board."*

## The Death of Pallas

Aeneas and his Tuscan allies arrive on the battle scene just in time to give the necessary support to the almost exhausted Trojans; and now the fight

rages more fiercely than ever, with deeds of great valour accomplished on both sides. Finally Evander's brave young son Pallas is killed by Turnus, who grabs his sword belt as a trophy. When is is made aware of the death of this promising young prince, Aeneas' heart is filled with grief, as he imagines the sorrow of Evander when he brings his son's body home for burial. Aeneas then and there registers a solemn vow to avenge Pallas' death by slaying Turnus, and immediately hastens forth to keep his word. It is foreshadowed in the extract from Book Ten below that Turnus will come to rue taking Pallas' sword belt, as from this point his destiny is sealed.

*Meanwhile Turnus' gracious sister bids him take Lausus' room, and his fleet chariot parts the ranks. When he saw his comrades, "It is time," he cried, "to stay from battle. I alone must assail Pallas; to me and none other Pallas is due; I would his father himself were here to see." So speaks he, and his Rutulians draw back from a level space at his bidding. But then as they withdrew, he, wondering at the haughty command, stands in amaze at Turnus, his eyes scanning the vast frame, and his fierce glance perusing him from afar. And with these words he returns the words of the monarch: "For me, my praise shall even now be in the lordly spoils I win, or in illustrious death: my father will bear calmly either lot: away with menaces." He speaks, and advances into the level ring.*

*The Arcadians' blood gathers chill about their hearts. Turnus leaps from his chariot and prepares to close with him. And as a lion sees from some lofty outlook a bull stand far off on the plain revolving battle, and flies at him, even such to see is Turnus' coming. When Pallas deemed him within reach of a spear-throw, he advances, if so chance may assist the daring of his overmatched strength, and thus cries into the depth of sky: "By my father's hospitality and the board whereto thou camest a wanderer, on thee I call, Alcides; be favourable to my high emprise; let Turnus even in death discern me stripping his blood-stained armour, and his swooning eyes endure the sight of his conqueror."*

*Alcides heard him, and deep in his heart he stifled a heavy sigh, and let idle tears fall. Then with kindly words the father accosts his son: "Each hath his own appointed day; short and irrecoverable is the span of life for all: but to spread renown by deeds is the task of valour. Under*

*high Troy town many and many a god's son fell; nay, mine own child Sarpedon likewise perished. Turnus too his own fate summons, and his allotted period hath reached the goal." So speaks he, and turns his eyes away from the Rutulian fields. But Pallas hurls his spear with all his strength, and pulls his sword flashing out of the hollow scabbard.*

*The flying spear lights where the armour rises high above the shoulder, and, forcing a way through the shield's rim, ceased not till it drew blood from mighty Turnus. At this Turnus long poises the spear-shaft with its sharp steel head, and hurls it on Pallas with these words: See thou if our weapon have not a keener point. He ended; but for all the shield's plating of iron and brass, for all the bull-hide that covers it round about, the quivering spear-head smashes it fair through and through, passes the guard of the corslet, and pierces the breast with a gaping hole. He tears the warm weapon from the wound; in vain; together and at once life-blood and sense follow it. He falls heavily on the ground, his armour clashes over him, and his bloodstained face sinks in death on the hostile soil. And Turnus standing over him…"Arcadians," he cries, "remember these my words, and bear them to Evander. I send him back his Pallas as was due. All the meed of the tomb, all the solace of sepulture, I give freely. Dearly must he pay his welcome to Aeneas."*

*And with these words, planting his left foot on the dead, he tore away the broad heavy sword-belt engraven with a tale of crime, the array of grooms foully slain together on their bridal night, and the nuptial chambers dabbled with blood, which Clonus, son of Eurytus, had wrought richly in gold. Now Turnus exults in spoiling him of it, and rejoices at his prize. Ah spirit of man, ignorant of fate and the allotted future, or to keep bounds when elate with prosperity! – the day will come when Turnus shall desire to have bought Pallas' safety at a great ransom, and curse the spoils of this fatal day. But with many moans and tears Pallas' comrades lay him on his shield and bear him away amid their ranks. O grief and glory and grace of the father to whom thou shalt return! This one day sent thee first to war, this one day takes thee away, while yet thou leavest heaped high thy Rutulian dead.*

*And now no rumour of the dreadful loss, but a surer messenger flies to Aeneas, telling him his troops are on the thin edge of doom; it is time*

*to succour the routed Teucrians. He mows down all that meets him, and hews a broad path through their columns with furious sword, as he seeks thee, O Turnus, in thy fresh pride of slaughter. Pallas, Evander, all flash before his eyes; the board whereto but then he had first come a wanderer, and the clasped hands. Here four of Sulmo's children, as many more of Ufens' nurture, are taken by him alive to slaughter in sacrifice to the shade below, and slake the flames of the pyre with captive blood.*

*Next he levelled his spear full on Magus from far. He stoops cunningly; the spear flies quivering over him; and, clasping his knees, he speaks thus beseechingly: "By thy father's ghost, by Iülus thy growing hope, I entreat thee, save this life for a child and a parent. My house is stately; deep in it lies buried wealth of engraven silver; I have masses of wrought and unwrought gold. The victory of Troy does not turn on this, nor will a single life make so great a difference." He ended; to him Aeneas thus returns answer: "All the wealth of silver and gold thou tellest of, spare thou for thy children. Turnus hath broken off this thy trafficking in war, even then when Pallas fell. Thus judges the ghost of my father Anchises, thus Iülus." So speaking, he grasps his helmet with his left hand, and, bending back his neck, drives his sword up to the hilt in the suppliant.*

## The Slaying of Turnus

As we come to the last book of the *Aeneid*, there have been losses on both sides. We know that Pallas has been slain by Turnus and Aeneas has vowed to avenge him. In his grief-stricken rage Aeneas slays many warriors, among others Lausus and his aged father Mezentius, two allies of Latinus, who had specially distinguished themselves by their great valour. In Book Twelve Aeneas and Turnus finally meet on the battlefield and Turnus is defeated, and an extract follows.

Virgil's epic ends here, but thi is not the end of the story of the founding of Rome. With the death of Turnus the war comes to an end. A lasting peace is made with Latinus; and the brave Trojan hero, whose woes are now over, is united in marriage with Lavinia. In concert with Latinus, Aeneas rules the Latins, and founds a city, which he calls Lavinia in honour of his bride, and which becomes for a time the capital of Latium.

Aeneas, as the gods had predicted, becomes the father of a son named Aeneas Silvia, who founds Alba Longa, where his descendants reign for many years, and where one of his race, the Vestal Virgin Ilia gives birth to Remus and Romulus, the founders of Rome.

*Meanwhile the King of Heaven's omnipotence accosts Juno as she gazes on the battle from a sunlit cloud. 'What yet shall be the end, O wife? What remains at the last? Heaven claims Aeneas as his country's god, thou thyself knowest and avowest to know, and fate lifts him to the stars. With what device or in what hope hangest thou chill in cloudland? Was it well that a deity should be sullied by a mortal's wound? Or that the lost sword – for what without thee could Juturna avail? – should be restored to Turnus and swell the force of the vanquished? Forbear now, I pray, and bend to our entreaties; let not the pain thus devour thee in silence, and distress so often flood back on me from thy sweet lips. The end is come. Thou hast had power to hunt the Trojans over land or wave, to kindle accursed war, to put the house in mourning, and plunge the bridal in grief: further attempt I forbid thee.' Thus Jupiter began: thus the goddess, daughter of Saturn, returned with looks cast down:*

*"Even because this thy will, great Jupiter, is known to me for thine, have I left, though loth, Turnus alone on earth; nor else wouldst thou see me now, alone on this skyey seat, enduring good and bad; but girt in flame I were standing by their very lines, and dragging the Teucrians into the deadly battle. I counselled Juturna, I confess it, to succour her hapless brother, and for his life's sake favoured a greater daring; yet not the arrow-shot, not the bending of the bow, I swear by the merciless well-head of the Stygian spring, the single ordained dread of the gods in heaven. And now I retire, and leave the battle in loathing.*

*"This thing I beseech thee, that is bound by no fatal law, for Latium and for the majesty of thy kindred. When now they shall plight peace with prosperous marriages (be it so!), when now they shall join in laws and treaties, bid thou not the native Latins change their name of old, nor become Trojans and take the Teucrian name, or change their language, or alter their attire: let Latium be, let Alban kings endure through ages, let Italian valour be potent in the race of Rome. Troy is fallen; let her and her name lie where they fell."*

*To her smilingly the designer of men and things:*

*"Jove's own sister thou art, and second seed of Saturn, such surge of wrath tosses within thy breast! But come, allay this madness so vainly stirred. I give thee thy will, and yield thee ungrudged victory. Ausonia shall keep her native speech and usage, and as her name is, it shall be. The Trojans shall sink mingling into their blood; I will add their sacred law and ritual, and make all Latins and of a single speech. Hence shall spring a race of tempered Ausonian blood, whom thou shalt see outdo men and gods in duty; nor shall any nation so observe thy worship." To this Juno assented, and in gladness withdrew her purpose; meanwhile she quits her cloud, and retires out of the sky.*

*This done, the Father revolves inly another counsel, and prepares to separate Juturna from her brother's arms. Twin monsters there are, called the Dirae by their name, whom with infernal Megaera the dead of night bore at one single birth, and wreathed them in like serpent coils, and clothed them in windy wings. They appear at Jove's throne and in the courts of the grim king, and quicken the terrors of wretched men whensoever the lord of heaven deals sicknesses and dreadful death, or sends terror of war upon guilty cities. One of these Jupiter sent swiftly down from heaven's height, and bade her meet Juturna for a sign. She wings her way, and darts in a whirlwind to earth. Even as an arrow through a cloud, darting from the string when Parthian hath poisoned it with bitter gall, Parthian or Cydonian, and sped the immedicable shaft, leaps through the swift shadow whistling and unknown; so sprung and swept to earth the daughter of Night.*

*When she espies the Ilian ranks and Turnus' columns, suddenly shrinking to the shape of a small bird that often sits late by night on tombs or ruinous roofs, and vexes the darkness with her cry, in such change of likeness the monster shrilly passes and repasses before Turnus' face, and her wings beat restlessly on his shield. A strange numbing terror unnerves his limbs, his hair thrills up, and the accents falter on his tongue. But when his hapless sister knew afar the whistling wings of the Fury, Juturna unbinds and tears her tresses, with rent face and smitten bosom. "How, O Turnus, can thine own sister help thee now? Or what more is there if I break not under this? What art of mine can lengthen out thy day? Can I contend with this ominous thing? Now,*

*now I quit the field. Dismay not my terrors, disastrous birds; I know these beating wings, and the sound of death, nor do I miss high-hearted Jove's haughty ordinance. Is this his repayment for my maidenhood? What good is his gift of life for ever? Why have I forfeited a mortal's lot? Now assuredly could I make all this pain cease, and go with my unhappy brother side by side into the dark. Alas mine immortality! Will aught of mine be sweet to me without thee, my brother? Ah, how may Earth yawn deep enough for me, and plunge my godhead in the under world!"*

*So spoke she, and wrapping her head in her grey vesture, the goddess moaning sore sank in the river depth.*

*But Aeneas presses on, brandishing his vast tree-like spear, and fiercely speaks thus: "What more delay is there now? Or why, Turnus, dost thou yet shrink away? Not in speed of foot, in grim arms, hand to hand, must be the conflict. Transform thyself as thou wilt, and collect what strength of courage or skill is thine; pray that thou mayest wing thy flight to the stars on high, or that sheltering earth may shut thee in." The other, shaking his head: "Thy fierce words dismay me not, insolent! the gods dismay me, and Jupiter's enmity."*

*And no more said, his eyes light on a vast stone, a stone ancient and vast that haply lay upon the plain, set for a landmark to divide contested fields: scarcely might twelve chosen men lift it on their shoulders, of such frame as now earth brings to birth: then the hero caught it up with trembling hand and whirled it at the foe, rising higher and quickening his speed. But he knows not his own self running nor going nor lifting his hands or moving the mighty stone; his knees totter, his blood freezes cold; the very stone he hurls, spinning through the empty void, neither wholly reached its distance nor carried its blow home. And as in sleep, when nightly rest weighs down our languorous eyes, we seem vainly to will to run eagerly on, and sink faint amidst our struggles; the tongue is powerless, the familiar strength fails the body, nor will words or utterance follow: so the disastrous goddess brings to naught all Turnus' valour as he presses on. His heart wavers in shifting emotion; he gazes on his Rutulians and on the city, and falters in terror, and shudders at the imminent spear; neither sees he whither he may escape nor how rush violently on the enemy, and nowhere his chariot or*

*his sister at the reins.*

*As he wavers Aeneas poises the deadly weapon, and, marking his chance, hurls it in from afar with all his strength of body. Never with such a roar are stones hurled from some engine on ramparts, nor does the thunder burst in so loud a peal. Carrying grim death with it, the spear flies in fashion of some dark whirlwind, and opens the rim of the corslet and the utmost circles of the sevenfold shield. Right through the thigh it passes hurtling on; under the blow Turnus falls huge to earth with his leg doubled under him. The Rutulians start up with a groan, and all the hill echoes round about, and the width of high woodland returns their cry. Lifting up beseechingly his humbled eyes and suppliant hand: "I have deserved it," he says, "nor do I ask for mercy; use thy fortune. If an unhappy parent's distress may at all touch thee, this I pray; even such a father was Anchises to thee; pity Daunus' old age, and restore to my kindred which thou wilt, me or my body bereft of day. Thou art conqueror, and Ausonia hath seen me stretch conquered hands. Lavinia is thine in marriage; press not thy hatred farther."*

*Aeneas stood wrathful in arms, with rolling eyes, and lowered his hand; and now and now yet more the speech began to bend him to waver: when high on his shoulder appeared the sword-belt with the shining bosses that he knew, the luckless belt of the boy Pallas, whom Turnus had struck down with mastering wound, and wore on his shoulders the fatal ornament. The other, as his eyes drank in the plundered record of his fierce grief, kindles to fury, and cries terrible in anger: "Mayest thou, thou clad in the spoils of my dearest, escape mine hands? Pallas it is, Pallas who now strikes the sacrifice, and exacts vengeance in thy guilty blood." So saying, he fiercely plunges the steel full in his breast. But his limbs grow slack and chill, and the life with a moan flies indignantly into the dark.*

# Biographies

**Richard Buxton**

*Foreword*

Richard Buxton is Emeritus Professor of Greek Language and Literature in the University of Bristol. His scholarly interests centre on ancient Greek literature and myth. Among his many books are *Imaginary Greece* (Cambridge University Press; translated into 5 languages), *The Complete World of Greek Mythology* (Thames and Hudson; translated into 10 languages), *Forms of Astonishment* and *Myths and Tragedies in their Ancient Greek Contexts* (both Oxford University Press). From 2006-2012 he was President of the Foundation for the *Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae*. He is fascinated by mythology, and takes every opportunity to convince others of the vital importance of stories and story-telling.

**Homer**

*The Odyssey*

(Text in this book translated by Samuel Butler; Roman names reverted to Greek)

Little is known for certain about the life of Homer, the Greek poet credited as the author of the great epic poems *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*, although he is believed to have been born sometime between the twelfth and eighth centuries BC. *The Odyssey*, generally considered one of the most fundamental works of the literary canon, describes the trials and tribulations of the hero Odysseus on his journey home to Ithaca following the Trojan War. It has had a huge influence on Western literature, inspiring extensive translations, poems, plays and novels.

**Virgil**

*The Aeneid*

(Text in this book translated by J.W. Mackail)

Publius Virgilius Maro (70–19 bc) was a Roman poet during the reign of Augustus. Virgil is best-known for his epic poem the *Aeneid*, modelled on the great epics of Homer, in which he describes the adventures of the

Trojan hero Aeneas as he abandons Troy after the Greeks win the war and seeks a new home in Italy. Aeneas is the ancestor of Romulus and Remus, who eventually found Rome itself. Virgil's other major works were the *Eclogues*, which explore the theme of revolutionary change; and the *Georgics*, which are ostensibly about agriculture but contain many other underlying themes.

# Text Sources

Contributors, authors, editors and sources for this series include: Loren Auerbach, Norman Bancroft-Hunt, E.M. Berens, Samuel Butler, Laura Bulbeck, Jeremiah Curtin, O.B. Duane, Dr Ray Dunning, W.W. Gibbings, H.A. Guerber, Jake Jackson, Joseph Jacobs, Judith John, Katharine Berry Judson, Charles Kingsley, Andrew Lang, J.W. Mackail, Chris McNab, Professor James Riordan, Rachel Storm, K.E. Sullivan.

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